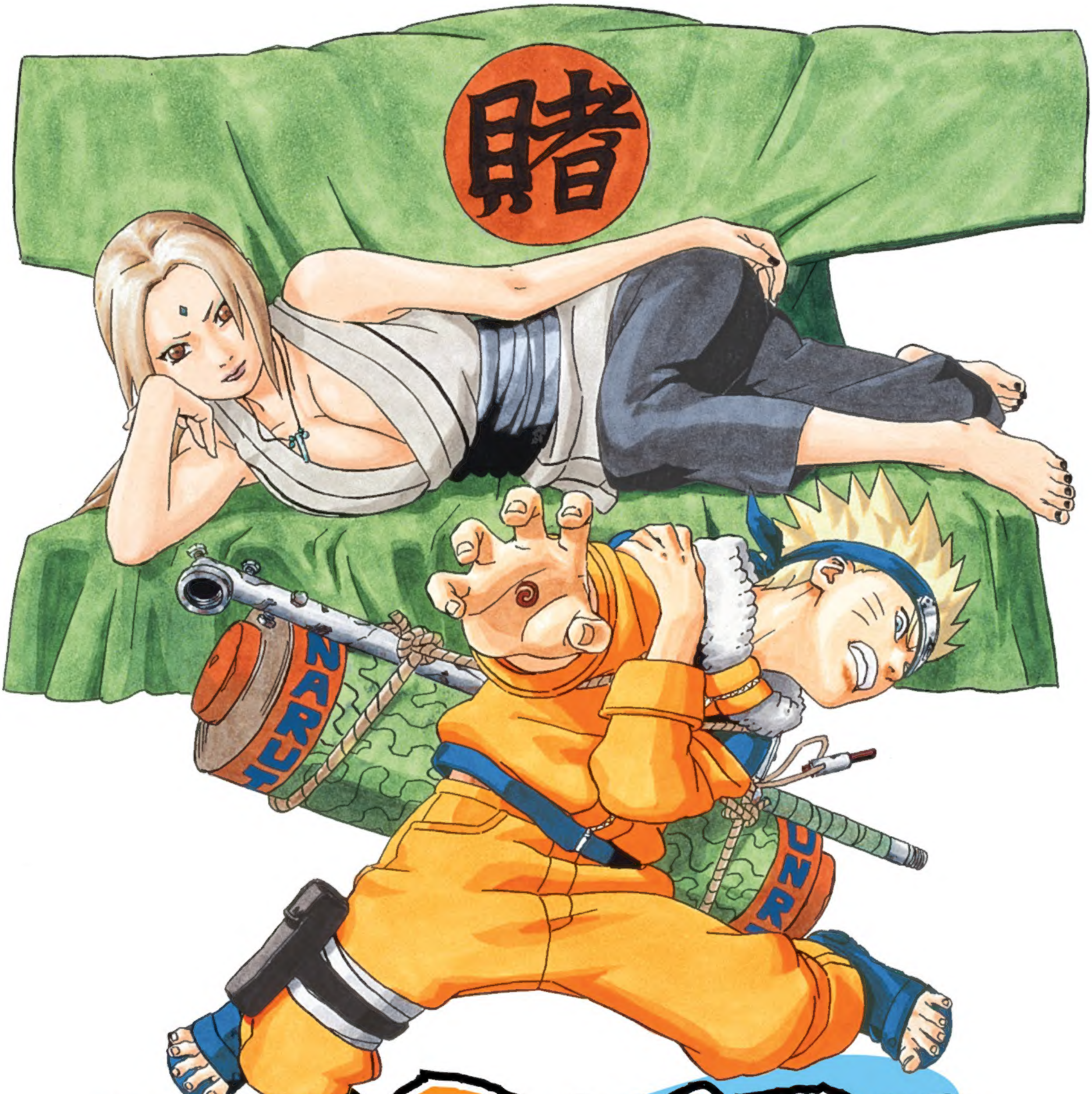

賭
NARUTO
NARUTO

NARUTO

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto

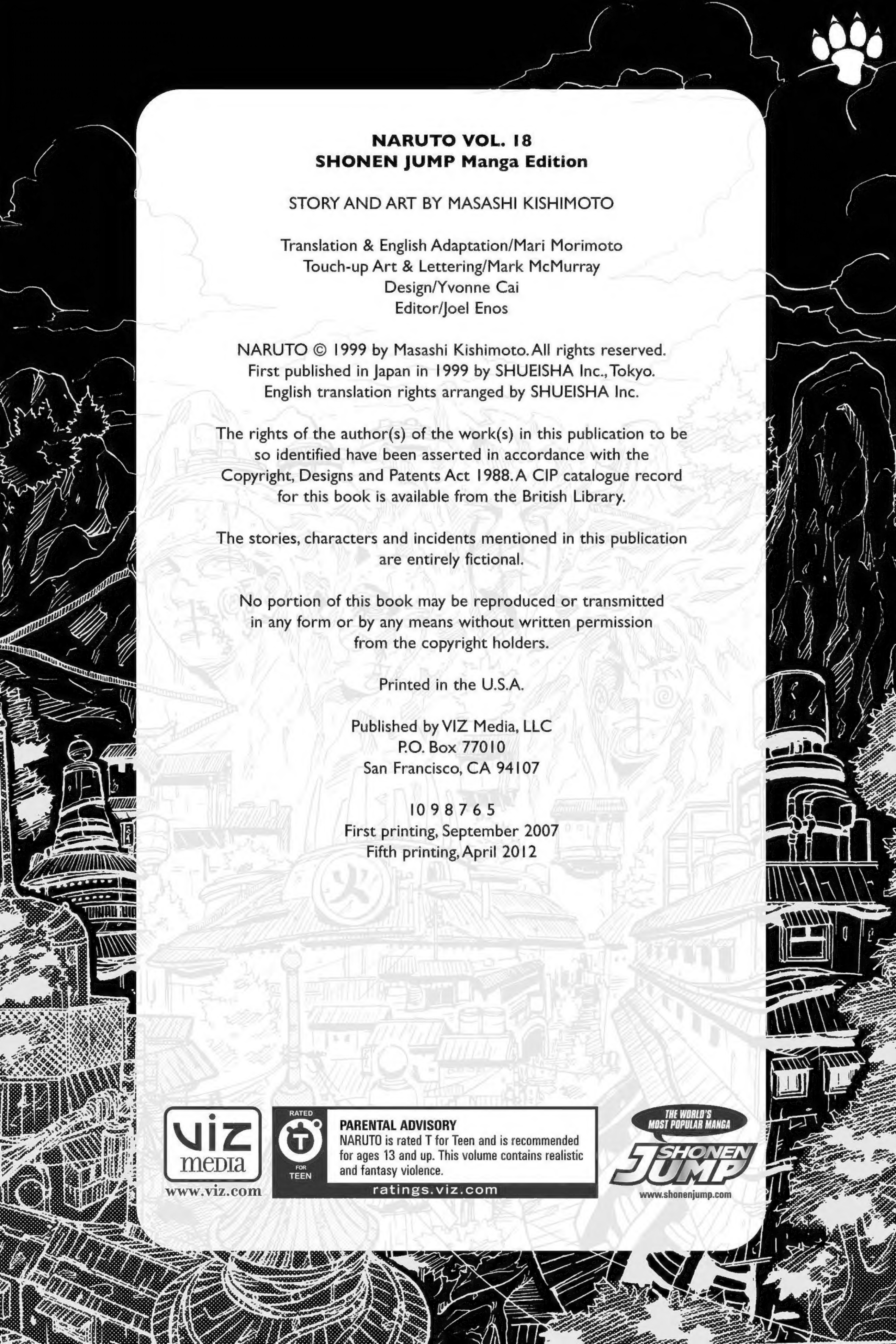
volume 18

岸本斉史

Recently, my shoulder pain has been getting worse...And it seems to always be my left shoulder. Why does my left shoulder get stiff when I'm right-handed? It's one of the Seven Great Mysteries of Kishimoto.

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2003

Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** (Mechanism). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.



NARUTO VOL. 18
SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

Translation & English Adaptation/Mari Morimoto
Touch-up Art & Lettering/Mark McMurray
Design/Yvonne Cai
Editor/Joel Enos

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RATED T FOR TEEN

PARENTAL ADVISORY
NARUTO is rated T for Teen and is recommended for ages 13 and up. This volume contains realistic and fantasy violence.
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THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR MANGA
SHONEN JUMP
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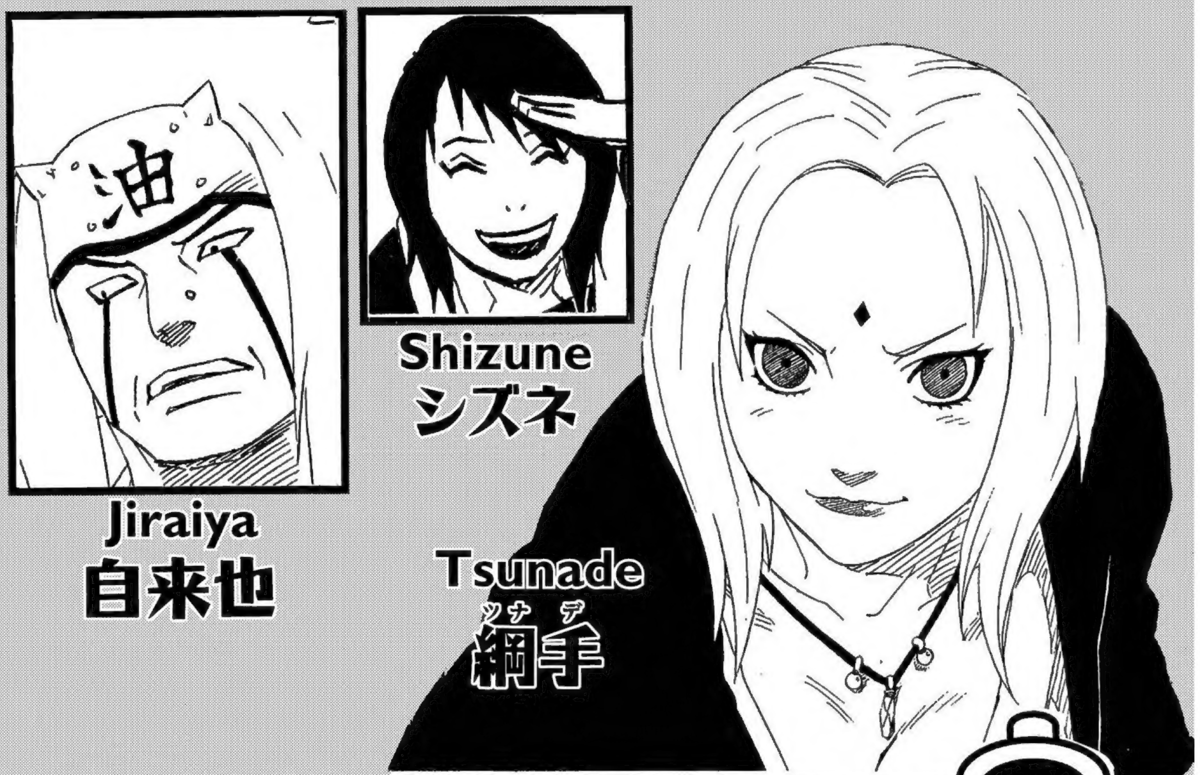
SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

NARUTO

VOL. 18

TSUNADE'S CHOICE

STORY AND ART BY
MASASHI KISHIMOTO


油
Jiraiya
自来也
Shizune
シズネ
Tsunade
ツナデ
綱手

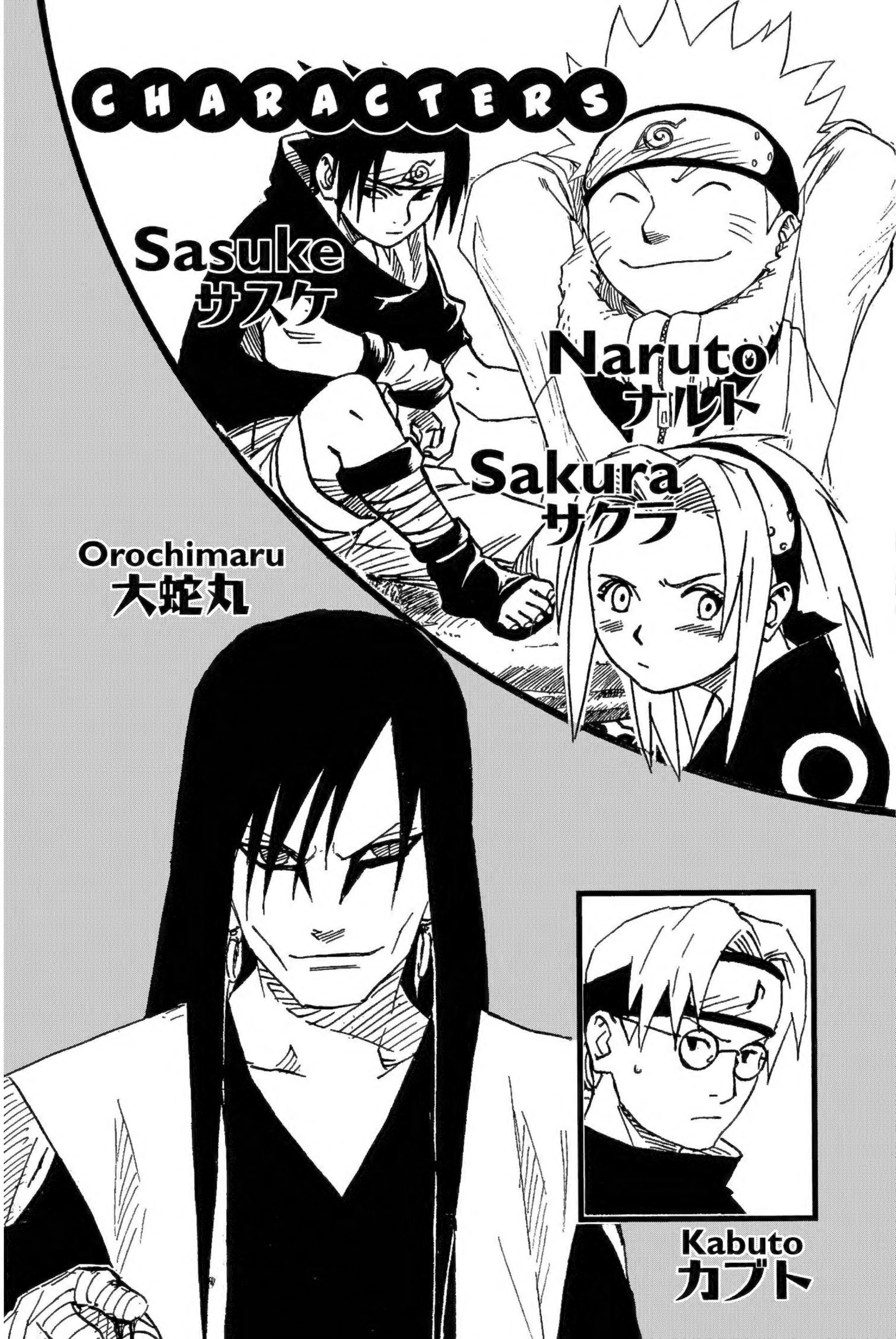
The Story So Far...

Twelve years ago a destructive nine-tailed fox spirit attacked the ninja village of Konohagakure. The Hokage, or village champion, defeated the fox by sealing its soul into the body of a baby boy. Now that boy, Uzumaki Naruto, has grown up to be a ninja-in-training, learning the art of ninjutsu with his teammates Sakura and Sasuke.

Naruto and company take on the Chûnin Selection Exams but suffer a sudden attack from Orochimaru in the Forest of Death. Orochimaru leaves a curse mark on Sasuke's body and vanishes, only to return *during* the final rounds to launch *Operation Destroy Konoha!*

While Naruto battles Gaara, the Third Hokage falls to Orochimaru. But Konohagakure is saved and Jiraiya and Naruto set out to hunt down the future Fifth Hokage, Tsunade. On the way, they encounter Itachi, Sasuke's demented older brother...

CHARACTERS


Sasuke
サスケ
Naruto
ナルト
Sakura
サクラ
Orochimaru
大蛇丸
Kabuto
カブト

NARUTO

VOL. 18

TSUNADE'S CHOICE

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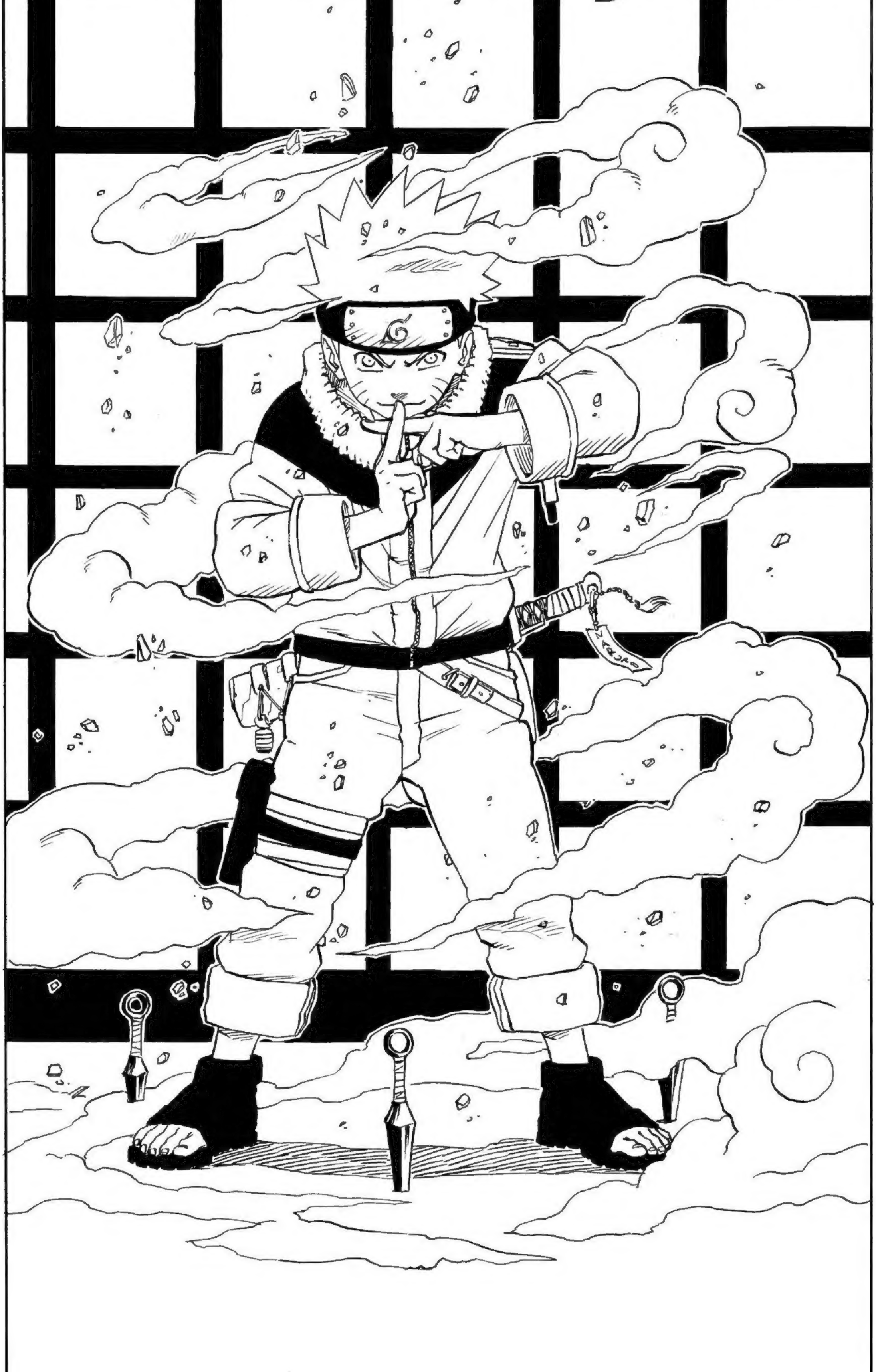
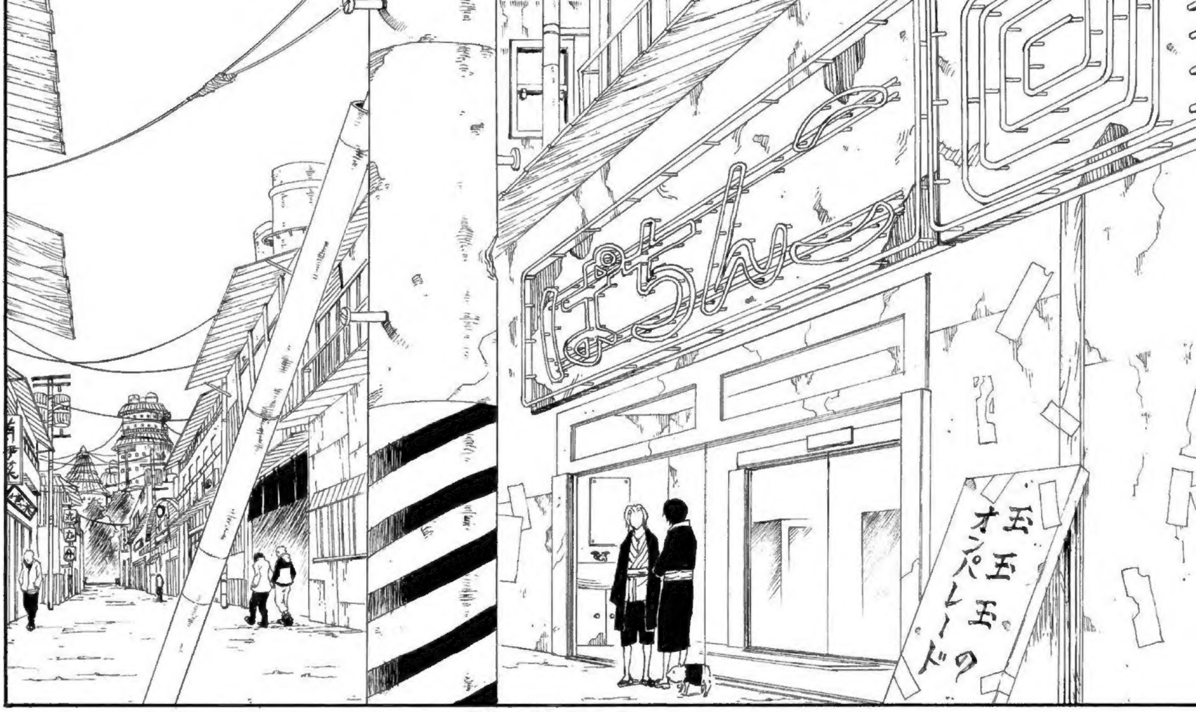
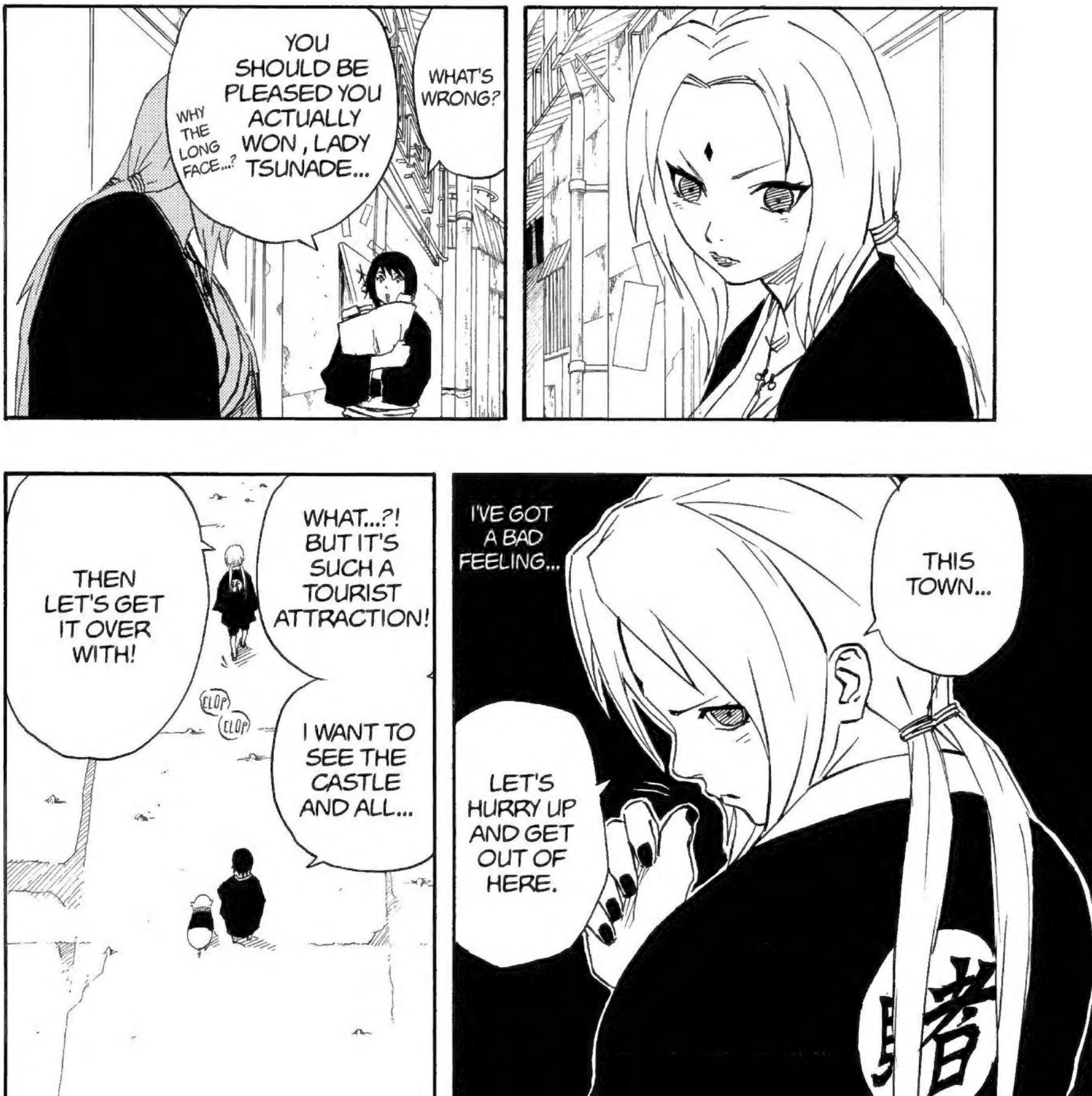
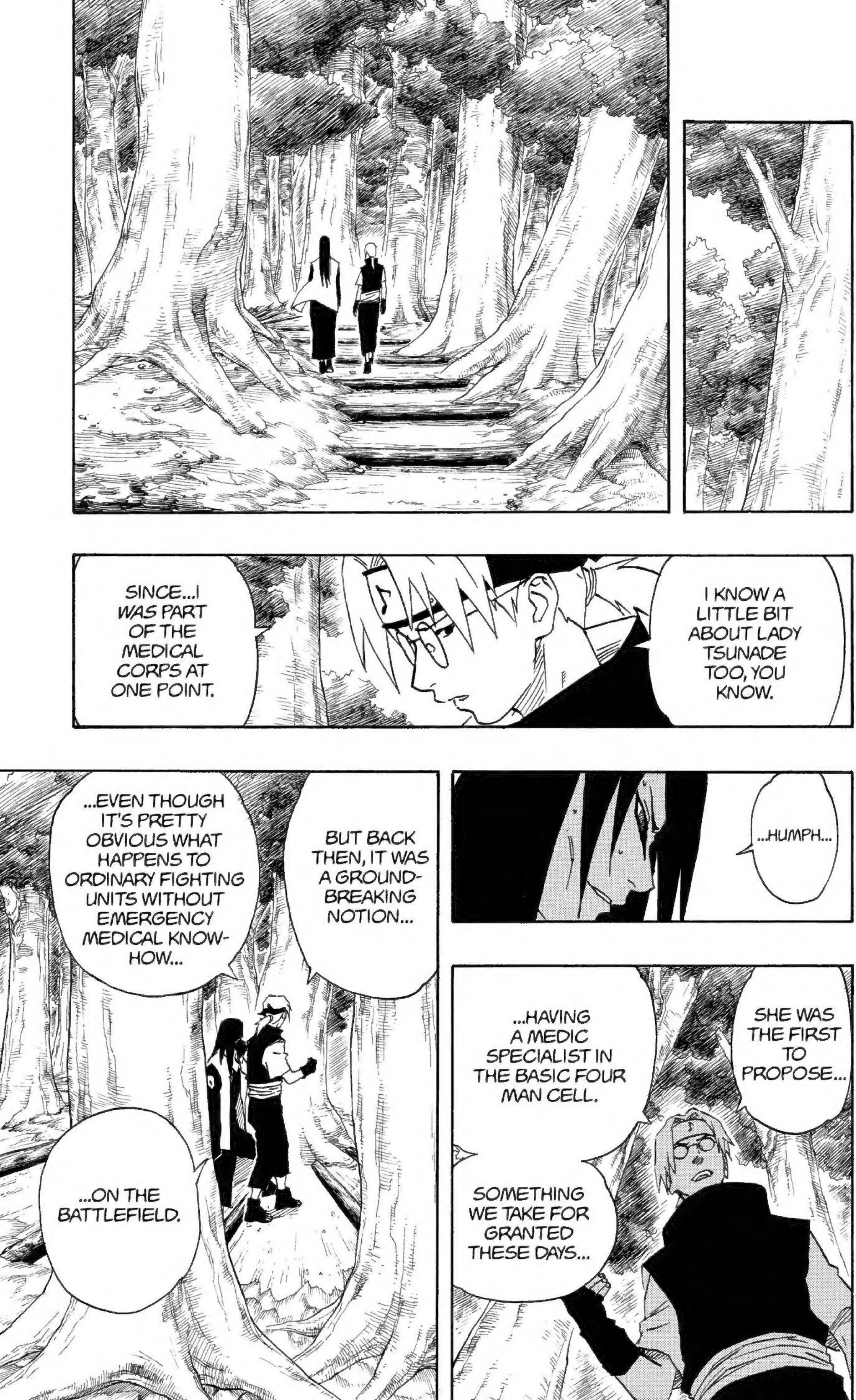
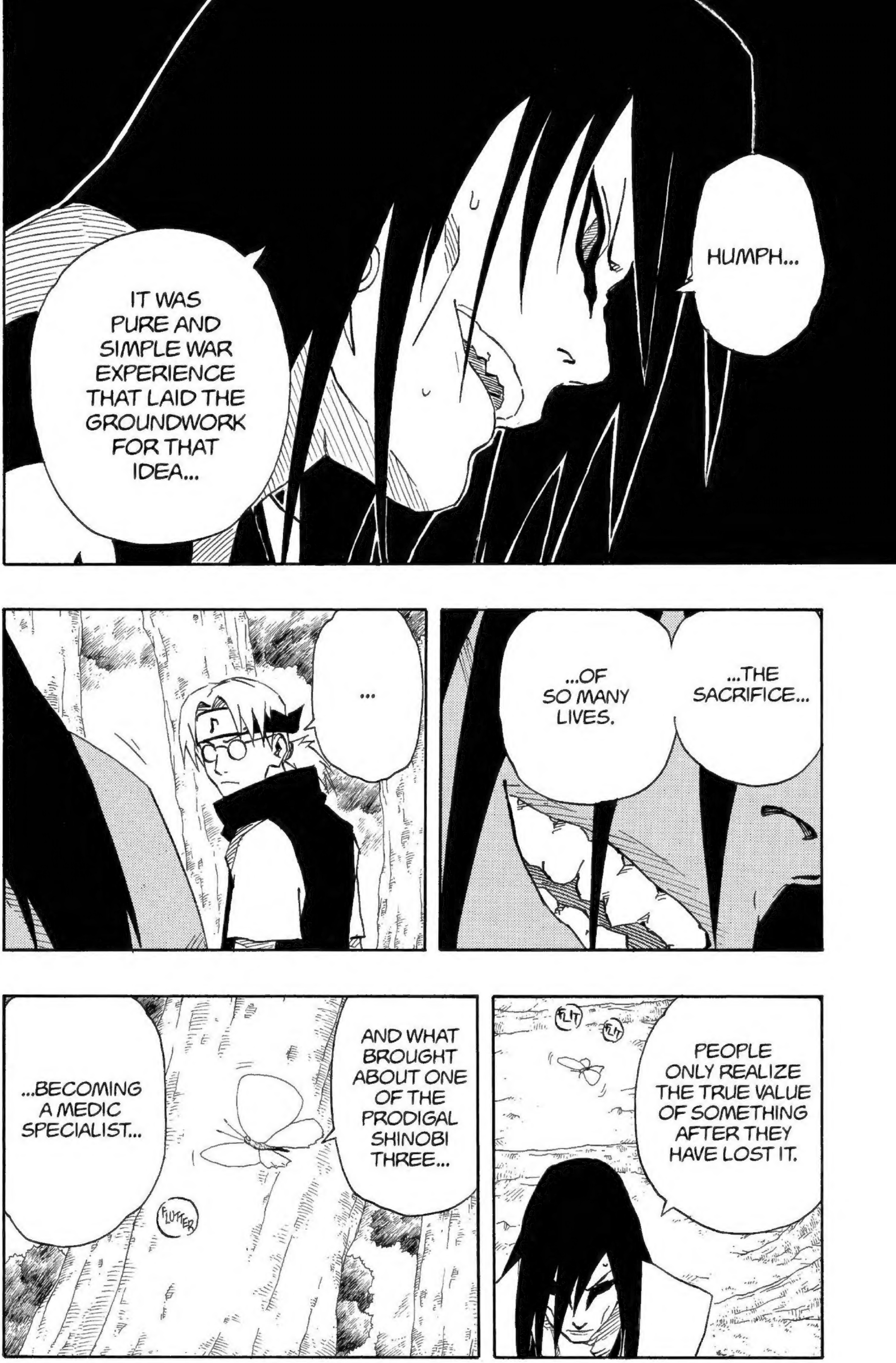


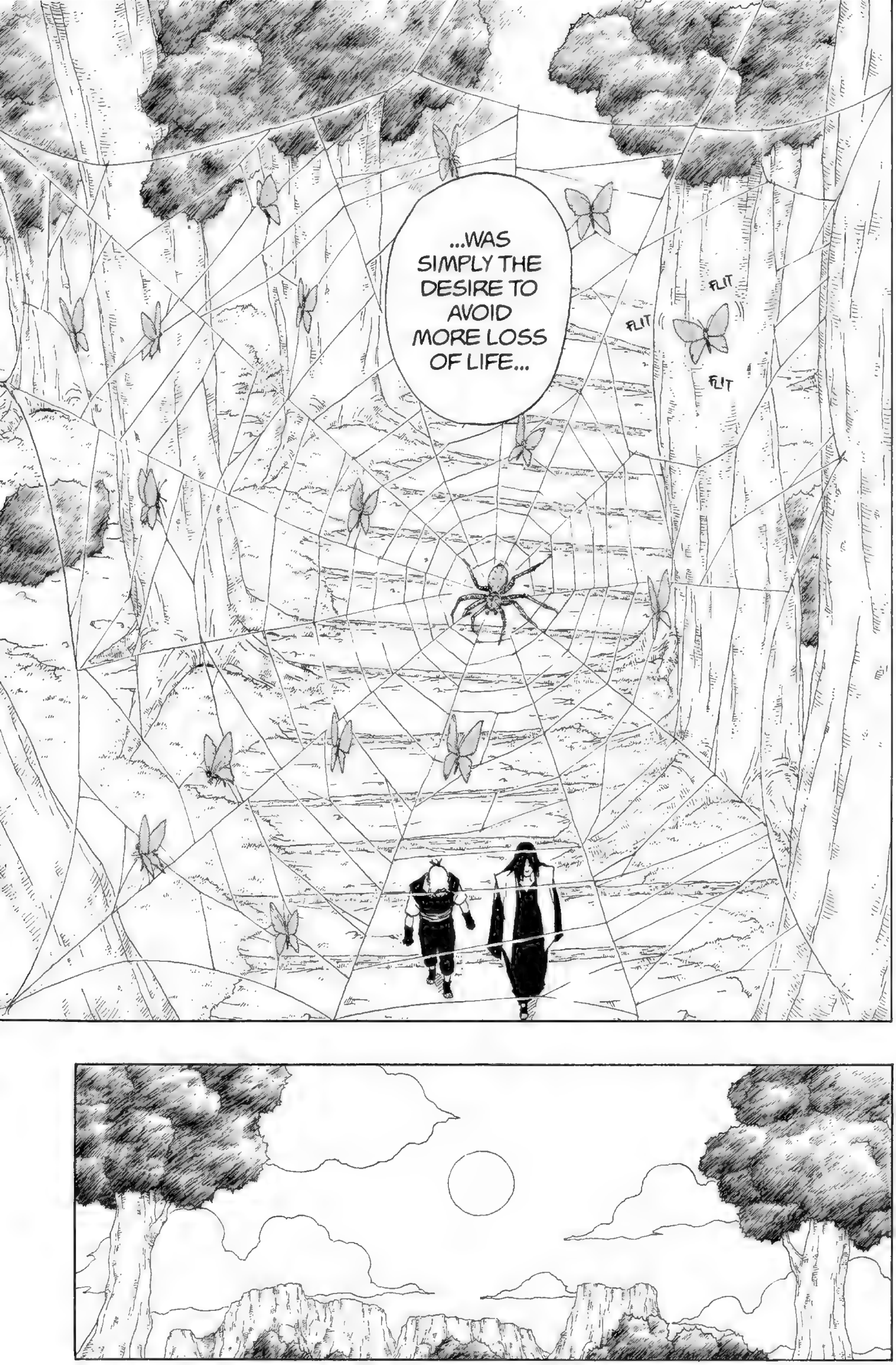

ぱちんこ
玉玉玉の
オンパレード

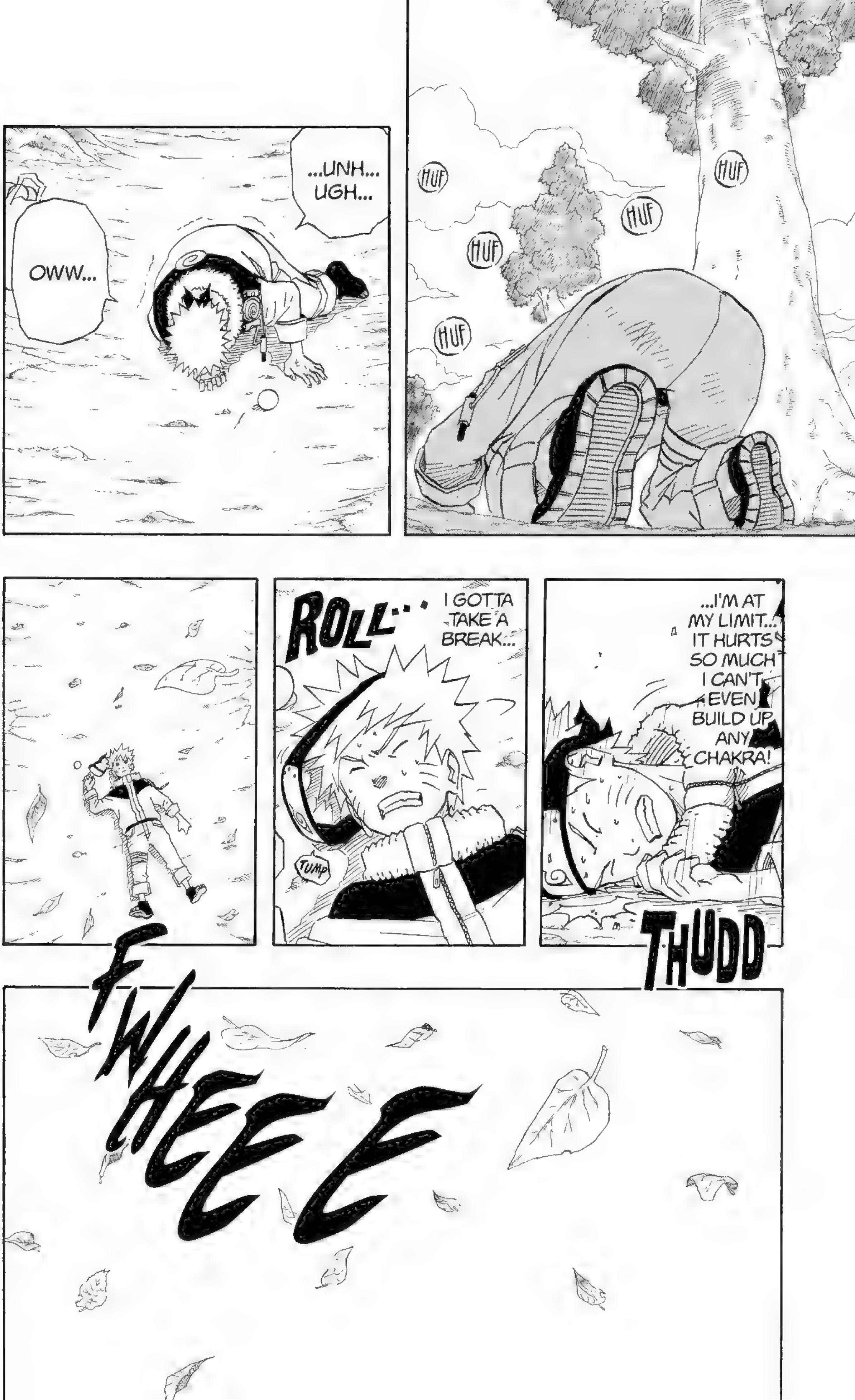
(Sign: Pachinko)


WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU SHOULD BE PLEASED YOU ACTUALLY WON, LADY TSUNADE...
WHY THE LONG FACE...?
THIS TOWN...
I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING...
LET'S HURRY UP AND GET OUT OF HERE.
賭
WHAT...?! BUT IT'S SUCH A TOURIST ATTRACTION!
I WANT TO SEE THE CASTLE AND ALL...
THEN LET'S GET IT OVER WITH!
CLOP
CLOP

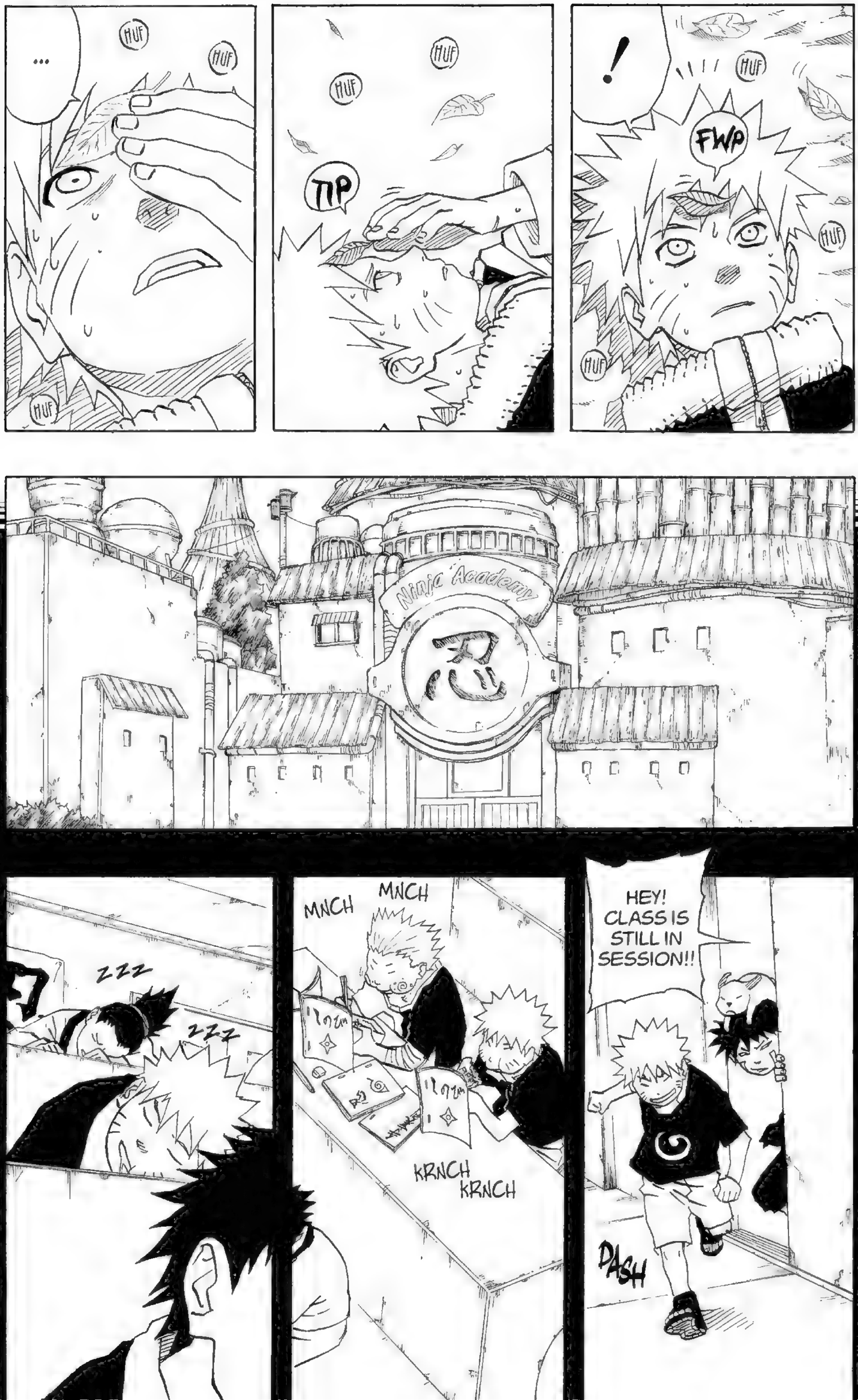

I KNOW A LITTLE BIT ABOUT LADY TSUNADE TOO, YOU KNOW.
SINCE...I *WAS* PART OF THE MEDICAL CORPS AT ONE POINT.
...HUMPH...
SHE WAS THE FIRST TO PROPOSE...
...HAVING A MEDIC SPECIALIST IN THE BASIC FOUR MAN CELL.
SOMETHING WE TAKE FOR GRANTED THESE DAYS...
BUT BACK THEN, IT WAS A GROUND-BREAKING NOTION...
...EVEN THOUGH IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS WHAT HAPPENS TO ORDINARY FIGHTING UNITS WITHOUT EMERGENCY MEDICAL KNOW-HOW...
...ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

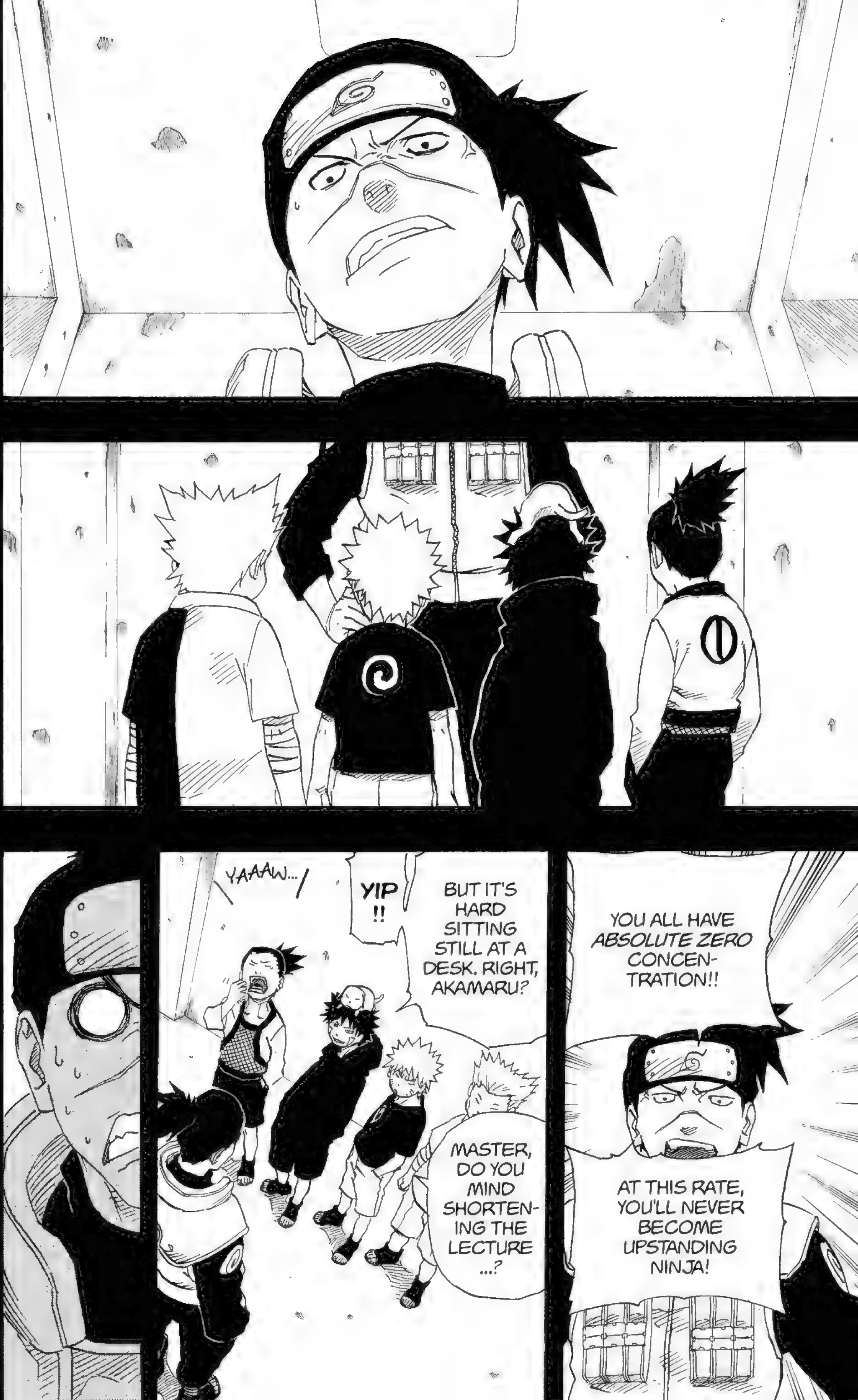

HUMPH...
IT WAS PURE AND SIMPLE WAR EXPERIENCE THAT LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR THAT IDEA...
...THE SACRIFICE...
...OF SO MANY LIVES.
...
FLIT
FLIT
PEOPLE ONLY REALIZE THE TRUE VALUE OF SOMETHING AFTER THEY HAVE LOST IT.
AND WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT ONE OF THE PRODIGAL SHINOBI THREE...
...BECOMING A MEDIC SPECIALIST...
FLUTTER


...WAS SIMPLY THE DESIRE TO AVOID MORE LOSS OF LIFE...
FLIT
FLIT
FLIT

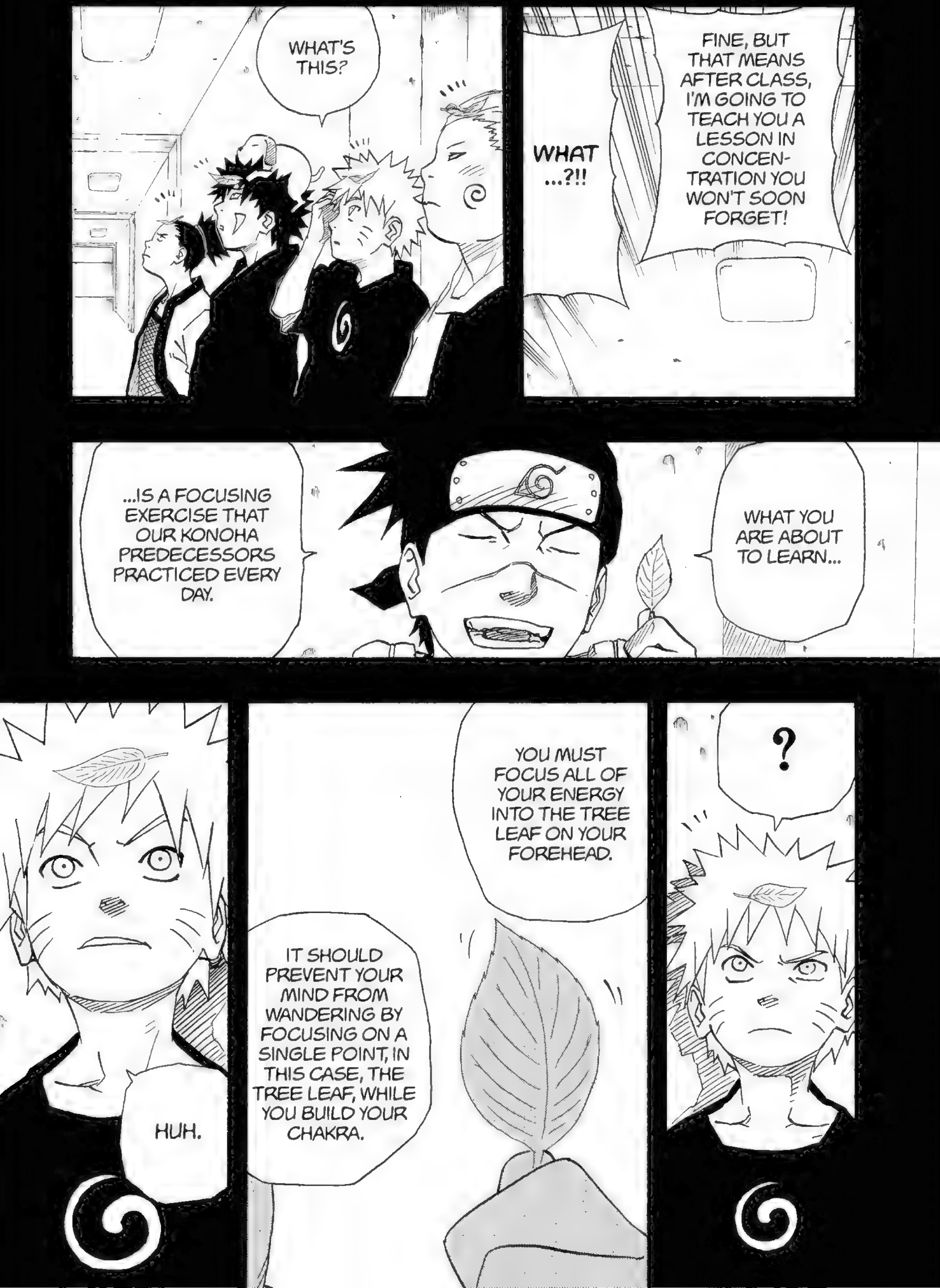

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
...UNH... UGH...
OWW...
...I'M AT MY LIMIT... IT HURTS SO MUCH I CAN'T EVEN BUILD UP ANY CHAKRA!
THUDD
I GOTTA TAKE A BREAK...
ROLL...
TUMP
FWHEEEE

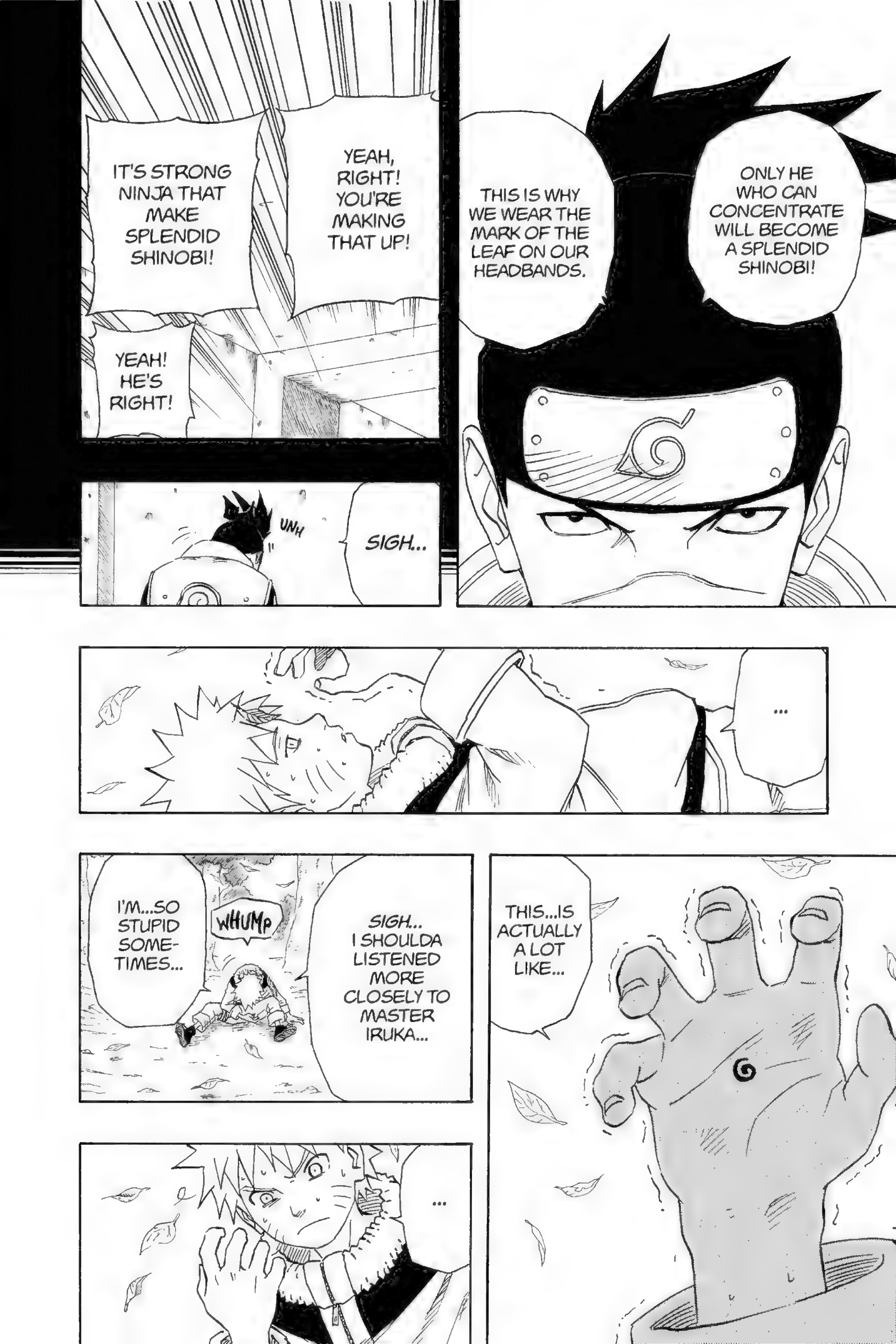
READ THIS WAY


!
HUF
FWP
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
TIP
...
HUF
HUF
HUF
Ninja Academy
HEY! CLASS IS STILL IN SESSION!!
DASH
MNCH
MNCH
KRNCH
KRNCH
ZZZ
ZZZ

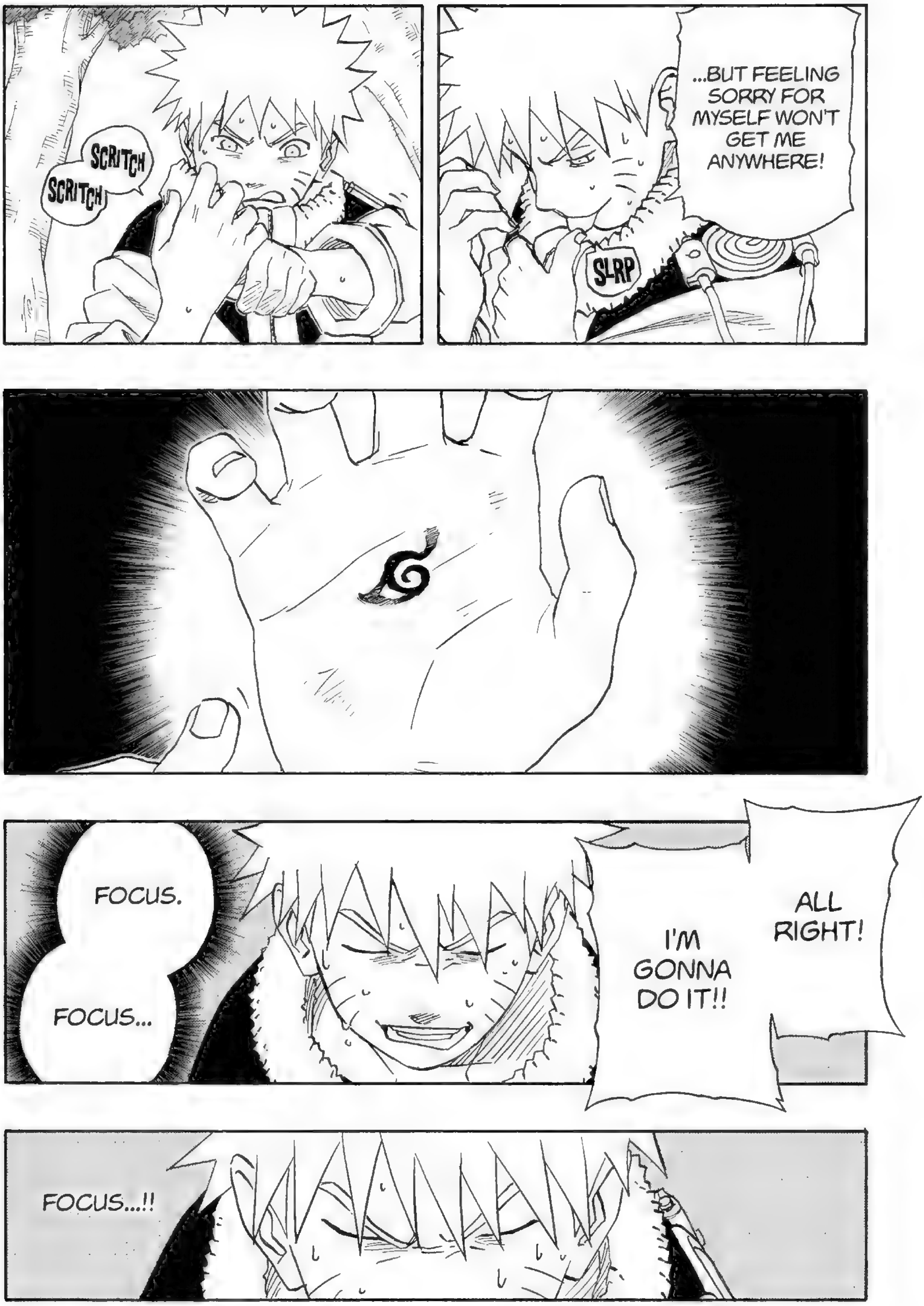

YOU ALL HAVE *ABSOLUTE ZERO* CONCENTRATION!!
AT THIS RATE, YOU'LL NEVER BECOME UPSTANDING NINJA!
BUT IT'S HARD SITTING STILL AT A DESK. RIGHT, AKAMARU?
YIP !!
YAAAW...!
MASTER, DO YOU MIND SHORTENING THE LECTURE ...?

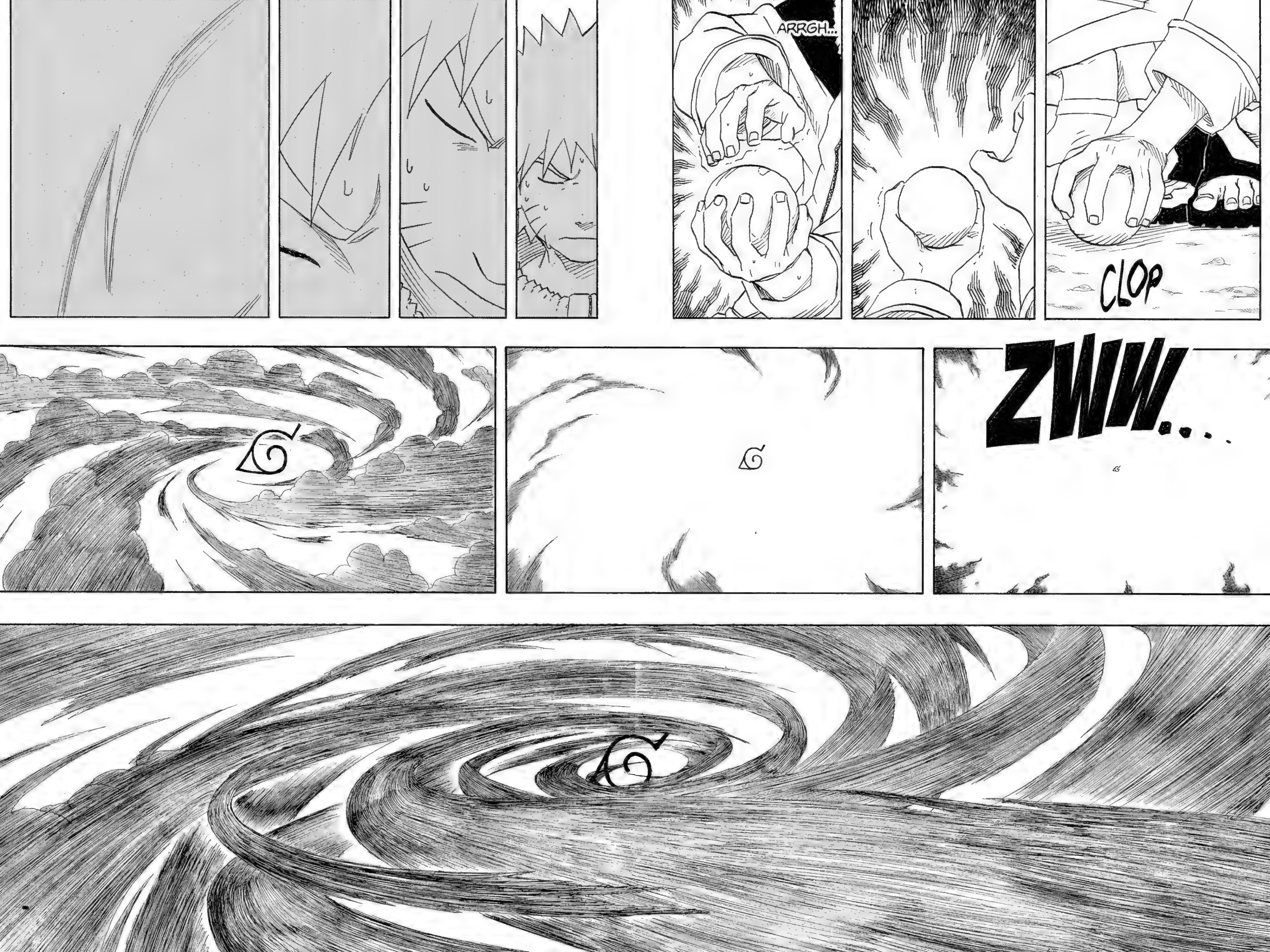
READ THIS WAY

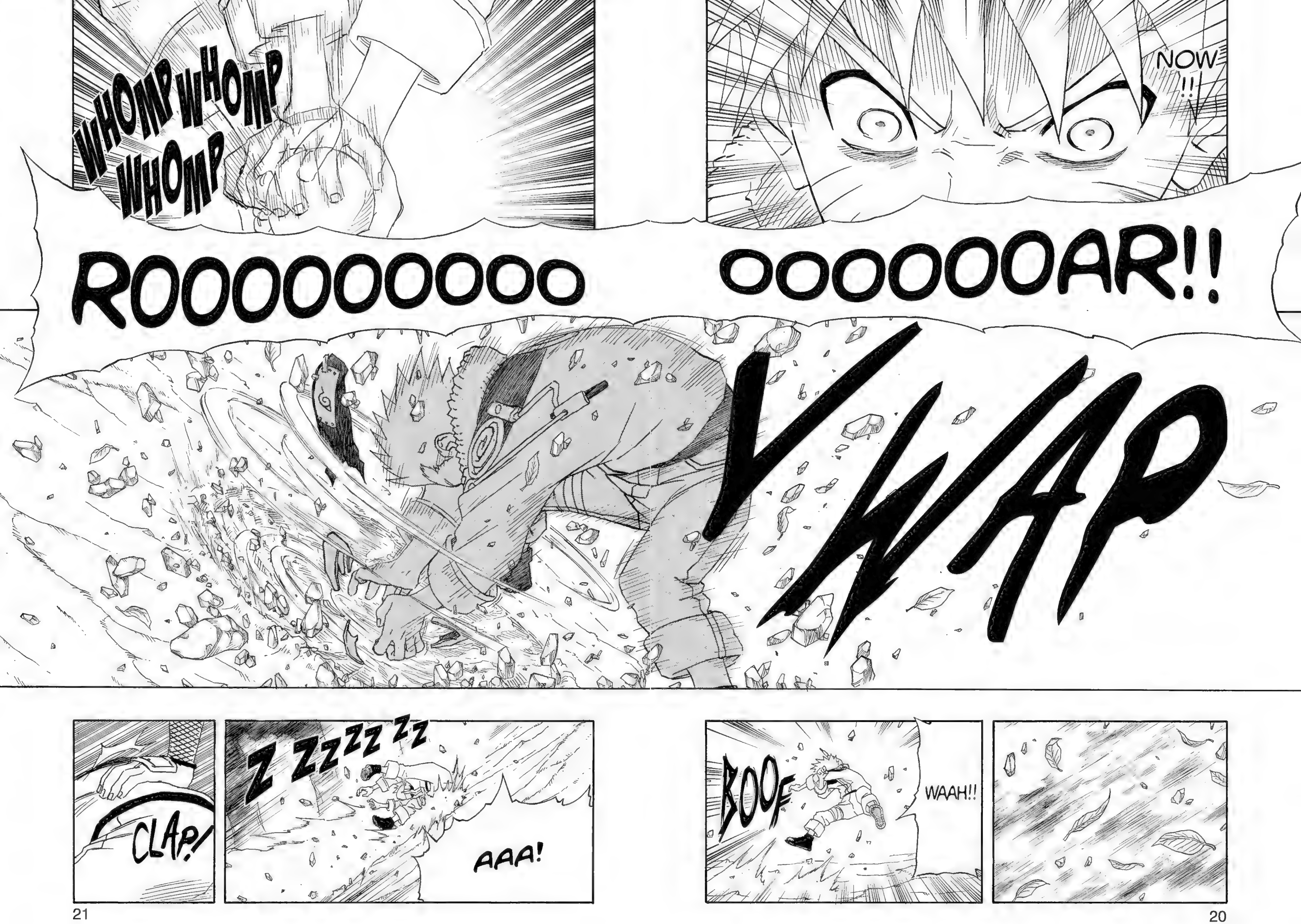

FINE, BUT THAT MEANS AFTER CLASS, I'M GOING TO TEACH YOU A LESSON IN CONCENTRATION YOU WON'T SOON FORGET!
WHAT ...?!!
WHAT'S THIS?
WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO LEARN...
...IS A FOCUSING EXERCISE THAT OUR KONOHA PREDECESSORS PRACTICED EVERY DAY.
?
YOU MUST FOCUS ALL OF YOUR ENERGY INTO THE TREE LEAF ON YOUR FOREHEAD.
IT SHOULD PREVENT YOUR MIND FROM WANDERING BY FOCUSING ON A SINGLE POINT, IN THIS CASE, THE TREE LEAF, WHILE YOU BUILD YOUR CHAKRA.
HUH.

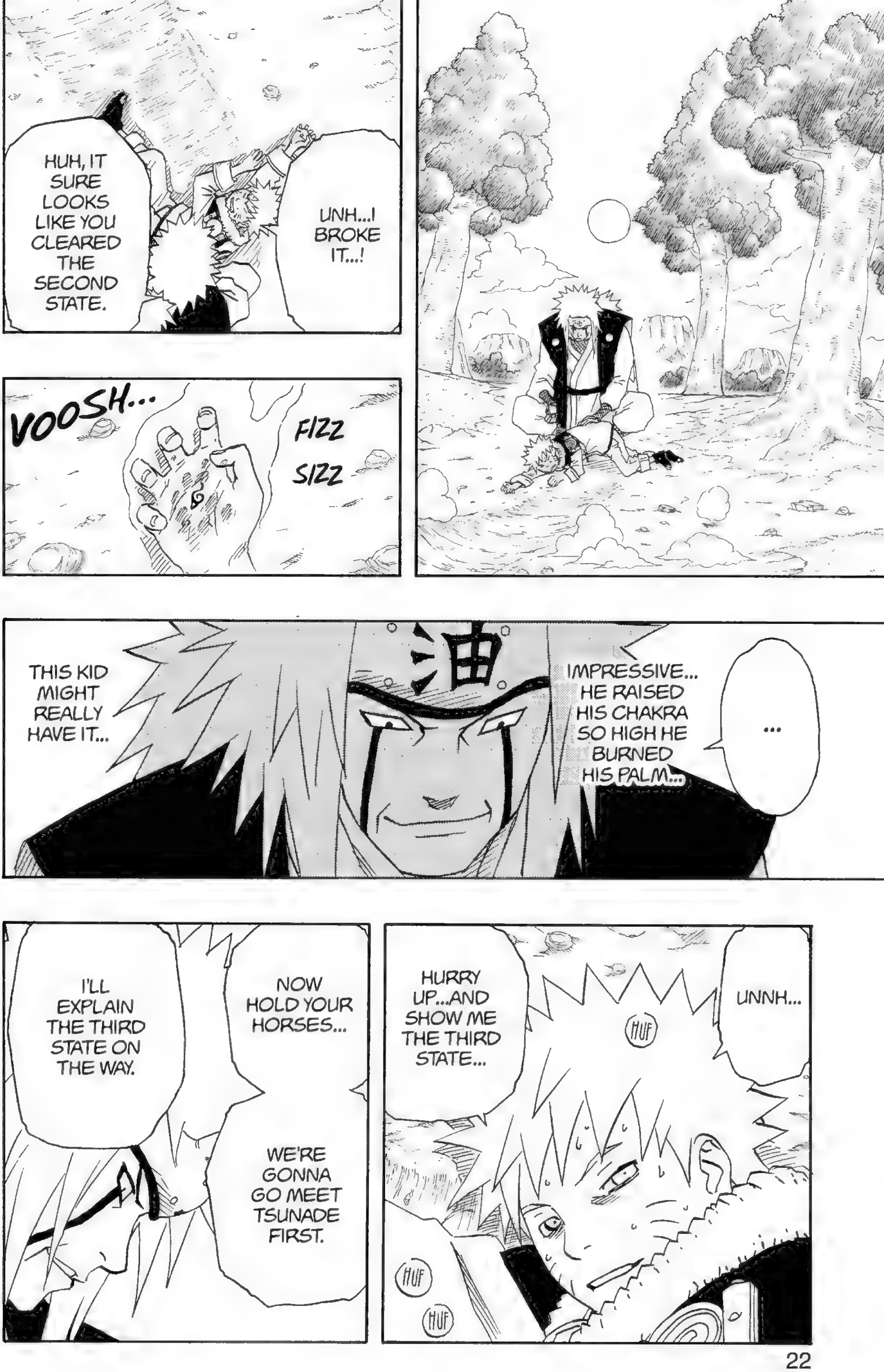

IT'S STRONG NINJA THAT MAKE SPLENDID SHINOBI!
YEAH, RIGHT! YOU'RE MAKING THAT UP!
YEAH! HE'S RIGHT!
UNH
SIGH...
THIS IS WHY WE WEAR THE MARK OF THE LEAF ON OUR HEADBANDS.
ONLY HE WHO CAN CONCENTRATE WILL BECOME A SPLENDID SHINOBI!
...
I'M...SO STUPID SOMETIMES...
WHUMP
SIGH... I SHOULDA LISTENED MORE CLOSELY TO MASTER IRUKA...
THIS...IS ACTUALLY A LOT LIKE...
...

READ THIS WAY

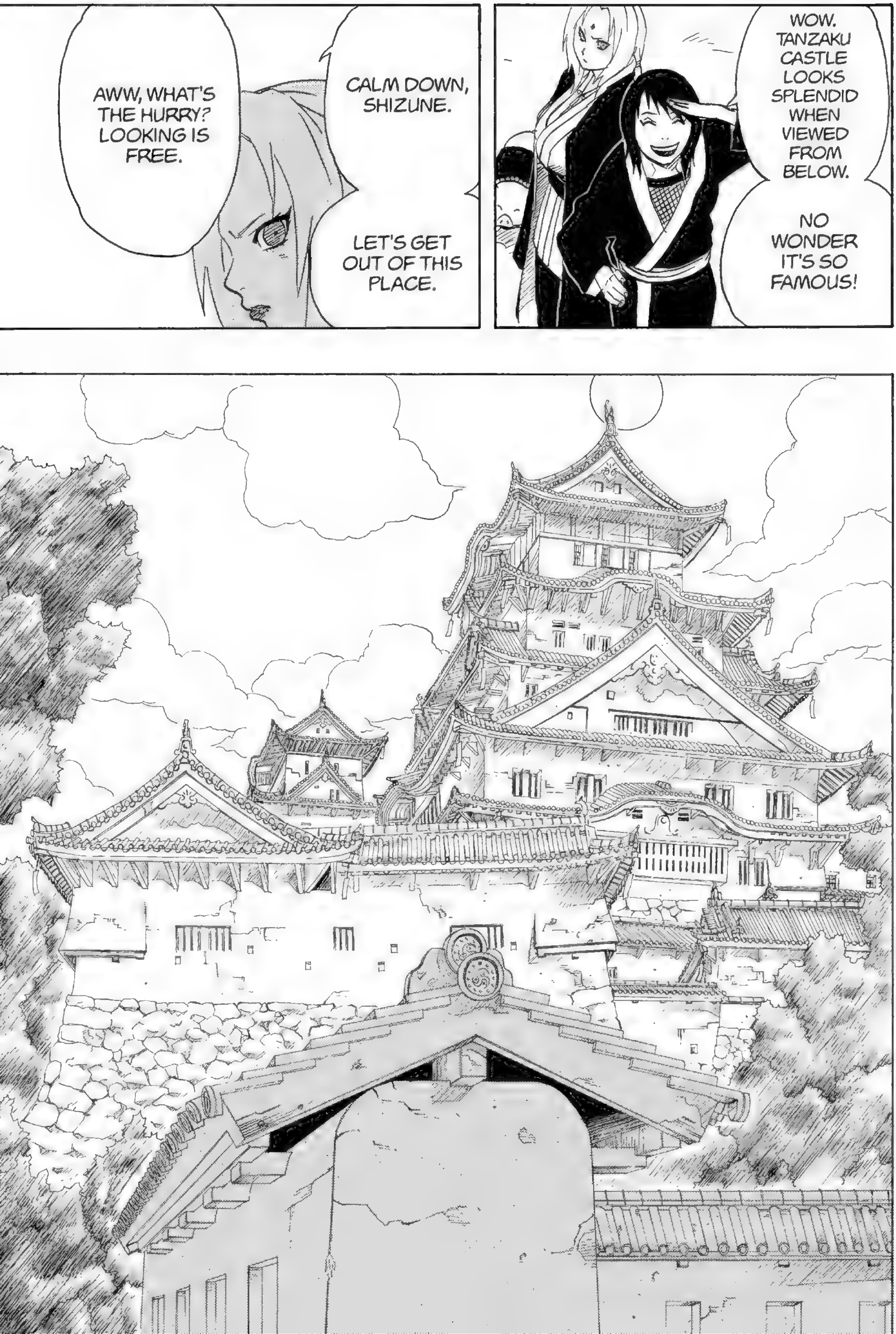

...BUT FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF WON'T GET ME ANYWHERE!
SLRP
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
ALL RIGHT!
I'M GONNA DO IT!!
FOCUS.
FOCUS...
FOCUS...!!

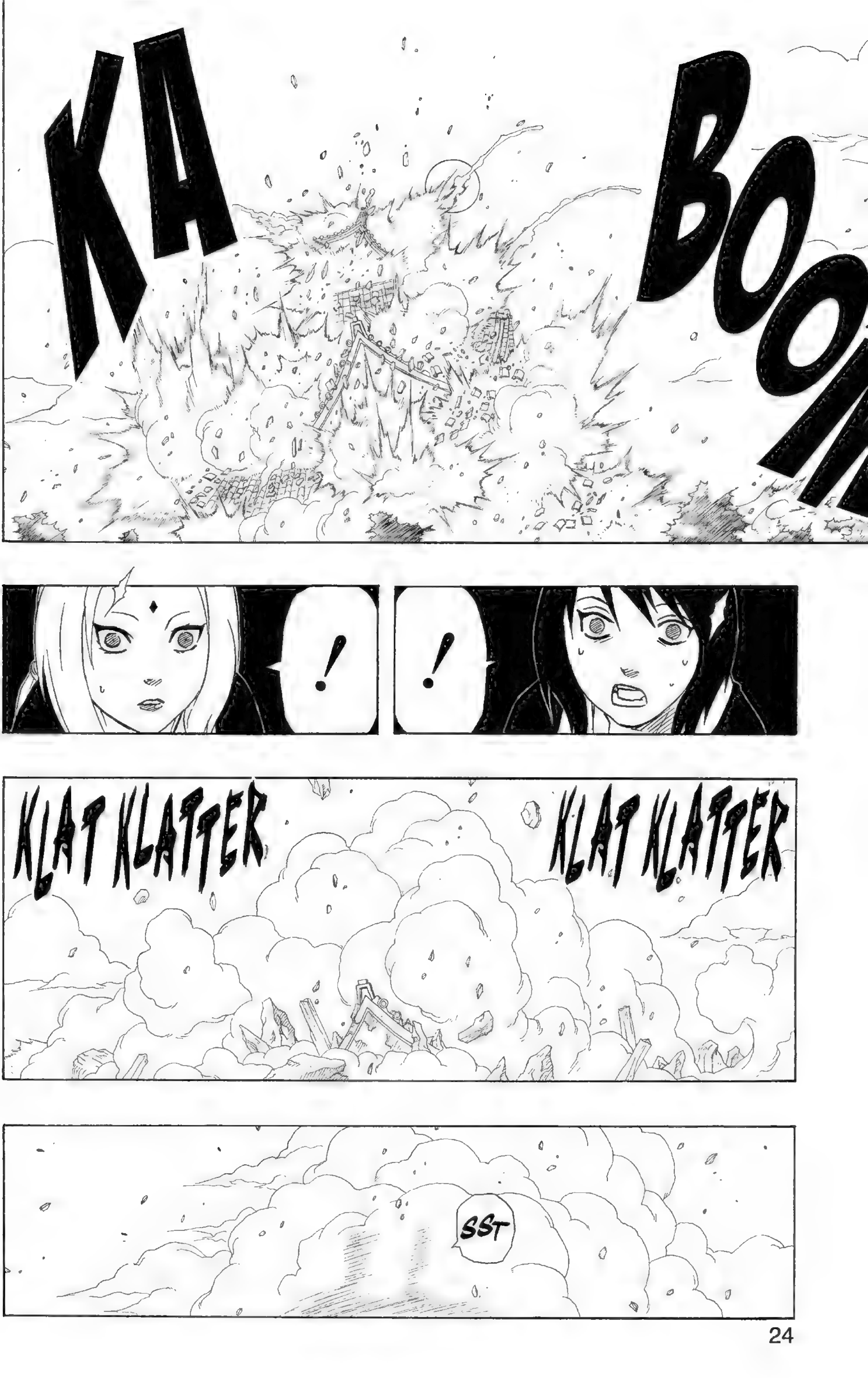

ARRGH...
CLOP
ZWW....

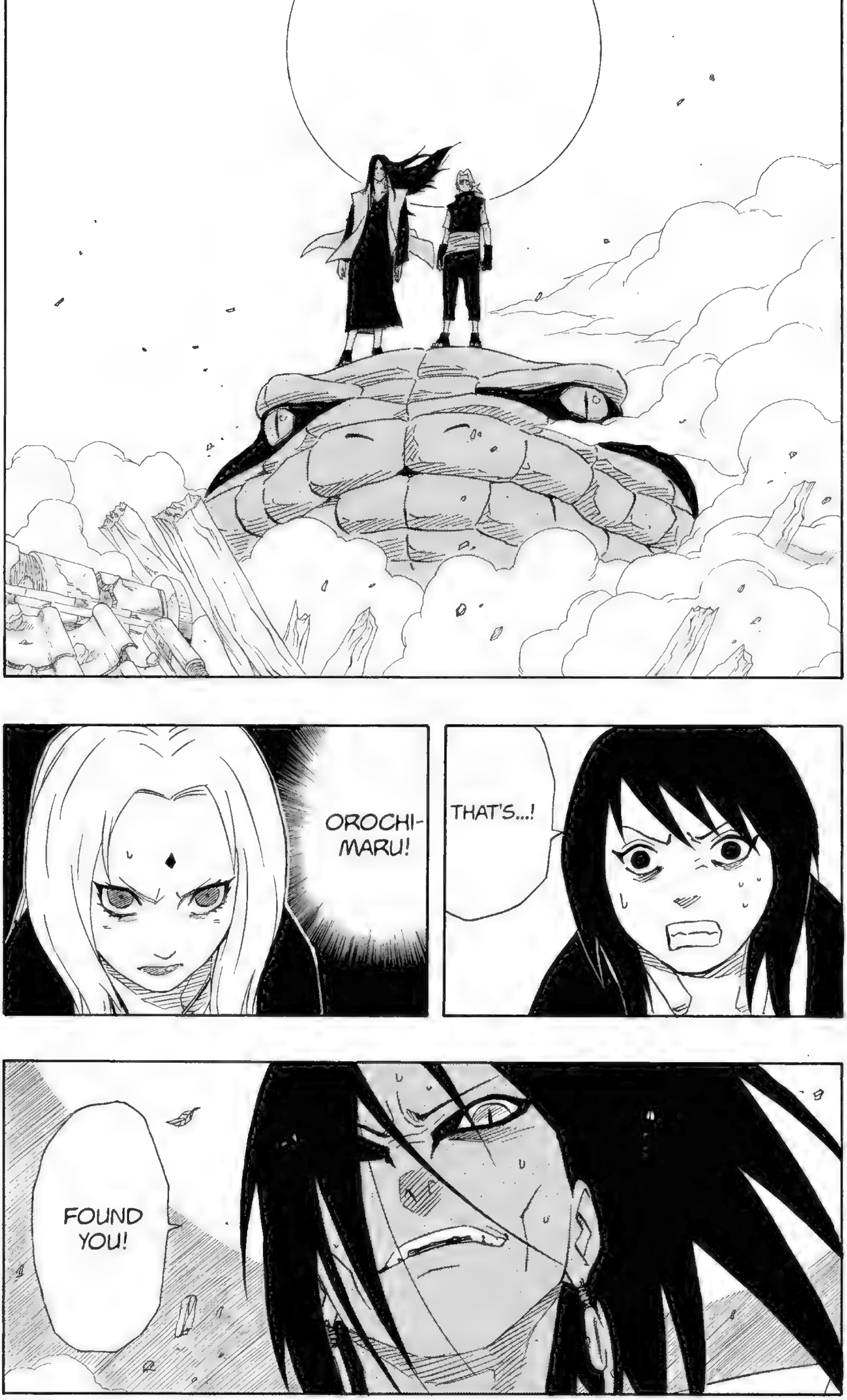

NOW!!
WHOMP WHOMP WHOMP WHOMP
ROOOOOOOOOO OOOOOOOAR!!
VWAP
WAAH!!
BOOF
AAA!
Z ZZZZ ZZ
CLAP!


UNH...I BROKE IT...!
HUH, IT SURE LOOKS LIKE YOU CLEARED THE SECOND STATE.
FIZZ
SIZZ
VOOSH...
...
IMPRESSIVE... HE RAISED HIS CHAKRA SO HIGH HE BURNED HIS PALM...
THIS KID MIGHT REALLY HAVE IT...
UNNH...
HURRY UP...AND SHOW ME THE THIRD STATE...
HUF
HUF
HUF
NOW HOLD YOUR HORSES...
WE'RE GONNA GO MEET TSUNADE FIRST.
I'LL EXPLAIN THE THIRD STATE ON THE WAY.
油

READ THIS WAY


WOW. TANZAKU CASTLE LOOKS SPLENDID WHEN VIEWED FROM BELOW.
NO WONDER IT'S SO FAMOUS!
CALM DOWN, SHIZUNE.
LET'S GET OUT OF THIS PLACE.
AWW, WHAT'S THE HURRY? LOOKING IS FREE.


KA BOOM
!
!
KLAT KLATTER
KLAT KLATTER
SST


THAT'S...!
OROCHI-MARU!
FOUND YOU!

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 27-A

SO I HAD FINALLY WON *WEEKLY SHONEN JUMP'S* NEWCOMER'S AWARD, WHICH HAD BEEN MY DEAREST DESIRE, AND TOOK ONE GIANT LEAP FORWARD TOWARD BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL MANGA ARTIST. I WAS ASSIGNED A PERSONAL EDITOR AND I RECEIVED 200,000 YEN [ABOUT $2,000] IN PRIZE MONEY, SO I WAS FLOATING ON AIR. FIRST, I DECIDED TO PUT ASIDE AND SAVE THE ENTIRE AMOUNT OF THE PRIZE PURSE. AT THE TIME, I WAS THE PROVERBIAL STARVING STUDENT ARTIST WHO HAD SO LITTLE MONEY THAT I WOULD SQUEEZE OUT AND USE EVERY LAST DROP OF PAINT IN THE TUBE.

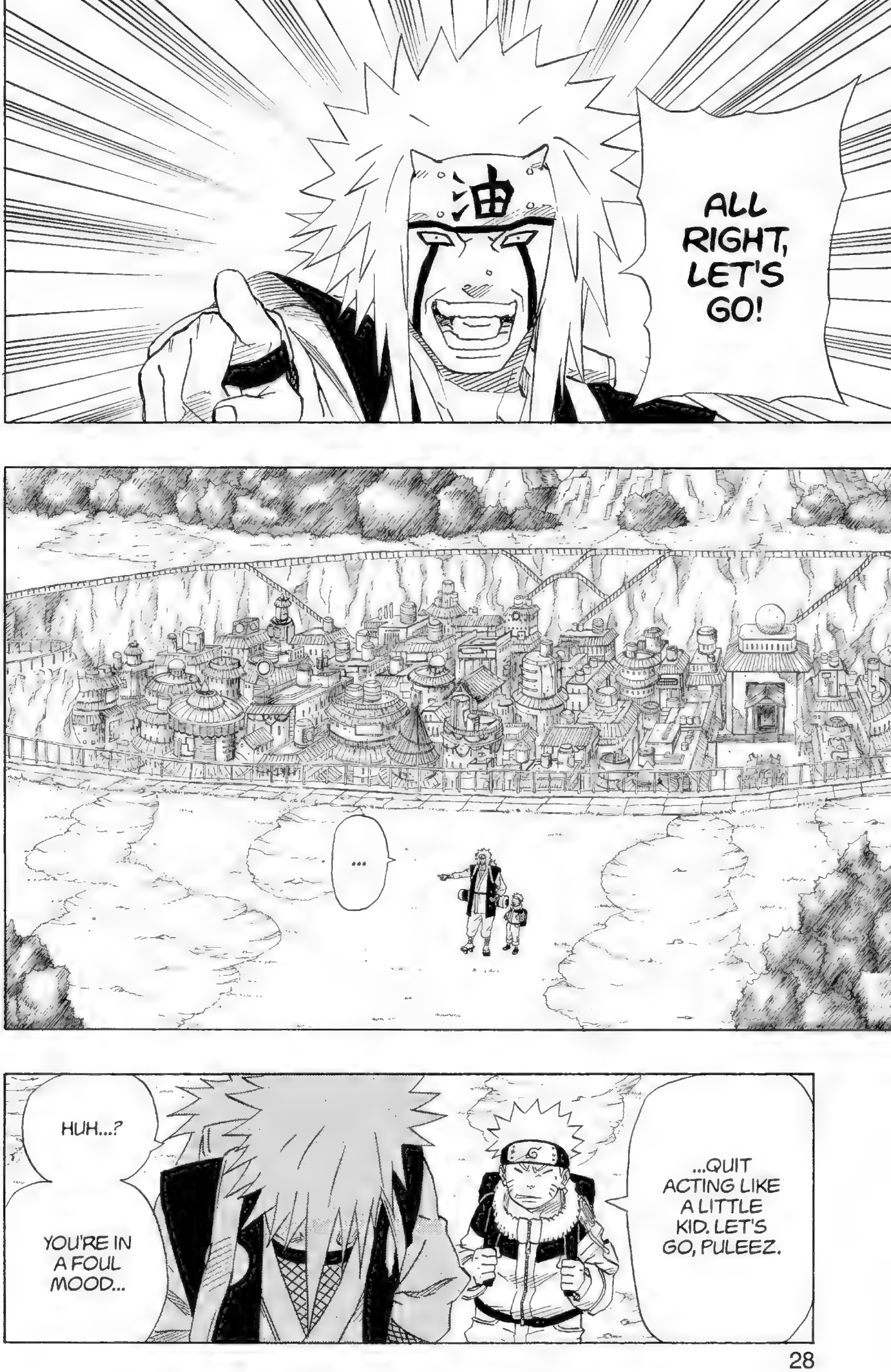
IN PARTICULAR, MY FAVORITE COBALT BLUE OIL PAINT... THAT SURE WAS EXPENSIVE! IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, EACH TUBE COST ABOUT 2,000 YEN [ABOUT $20]...

BECAUSE THE SUPER-FRUGAL ME WOULD MAKE THE COBALT BLUE GO FURTHER BY THINNING IT WITH ADDITIONAL OIL, THERE STARTED TO BE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN COLOR DENSITY BETWEEN MY PAINTINGS AND THOSE OF MY BOURGEOIS CLASSMATES WHO JUST SLATHERED IT ON. IT GOT TO A POINT WHERE MY ART INSTRUCTOR WOULD REGULARLY SCOLD ME, "*TOO LIGHT!*" OR "*YOU NEED TO GIVE IT A HEAVIER, MORE OPPRESSIVE FEELING, YATTA YATTA.*" ON TOP OF IT ALL, HE'D SAY, "*ARE YOU SLACKING?*" OR "*YOU OUGHT TO TAKE MORE TIME WITH IT, AND USE MANY MORE COLORS. YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH COLORS!*" THAT INSTRUCTOR DEFINITELY DIDN'T TAKE HIS STUDENTS' WALLET CONTENTS INTO CONSIDERATION...

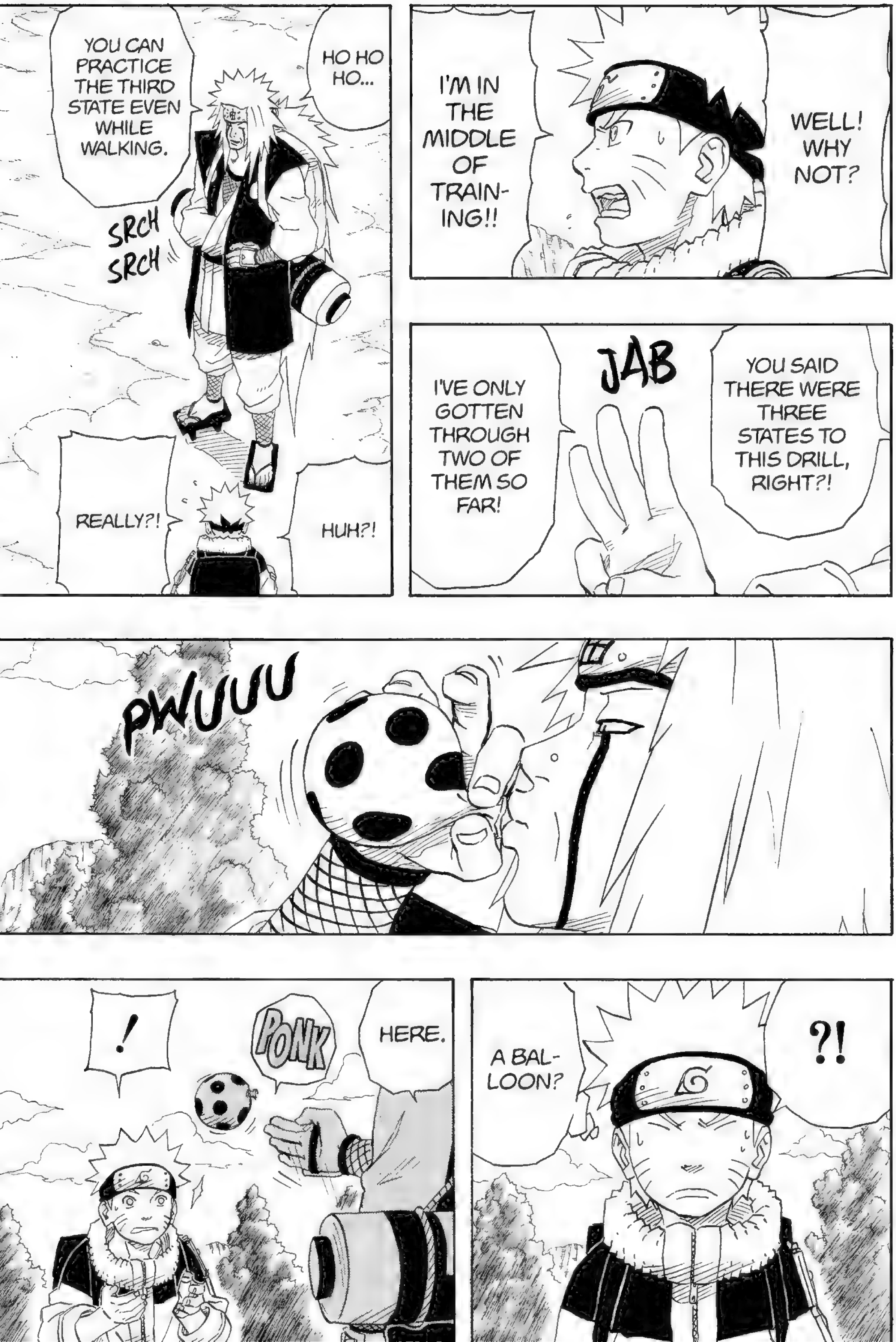
I WANTED TO SHOUT BACK, I CAN'T HELP IT IF I CAN'T AFFORD MORE PAINT TUBES! BUT ACTUALLY, AT THAT POINT I DIDN'T REALLY CARE ANYMORE...THAT'S BECAUSE THE CONSTANTLY MONEY-GOBBLING OIL PAINTING BUSINESS HAD LOST ITS APPEAL, AND I WAS ALSO TIRED OF THE WHINING, HIGH-NOSED ART WORLD. I'D RATHER SPEND WHAT PRECIOUS MONEY I HAD ON THE MOVIES, WHICH MIGHT HELP ME DRAW MANGA... AND THUS, I DECIDED TO SPEND ALL MY MONEY ON MOVIES AND VIDEOS.

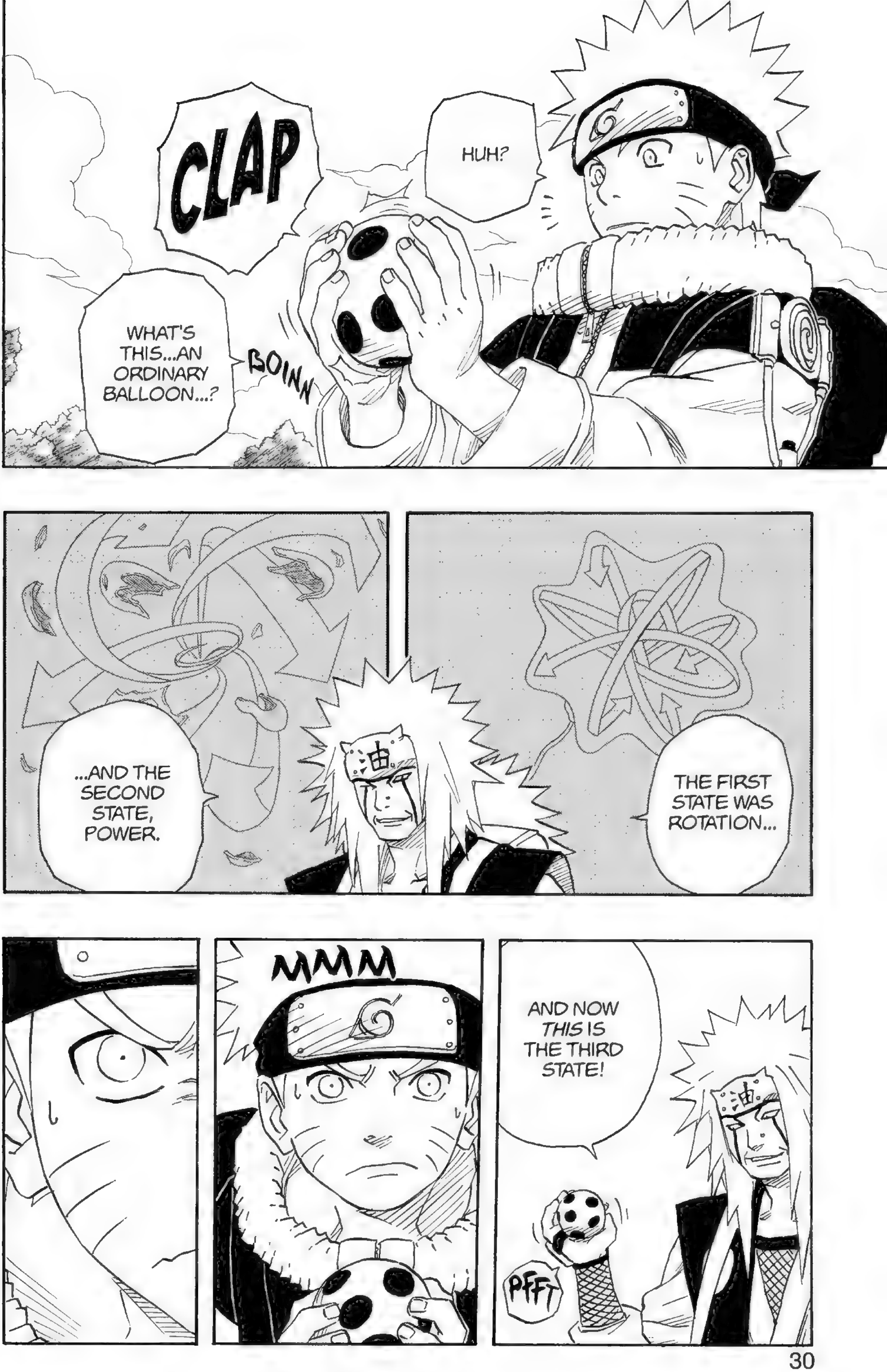
(TO BE CONTINUED)

Number 155: The Third State

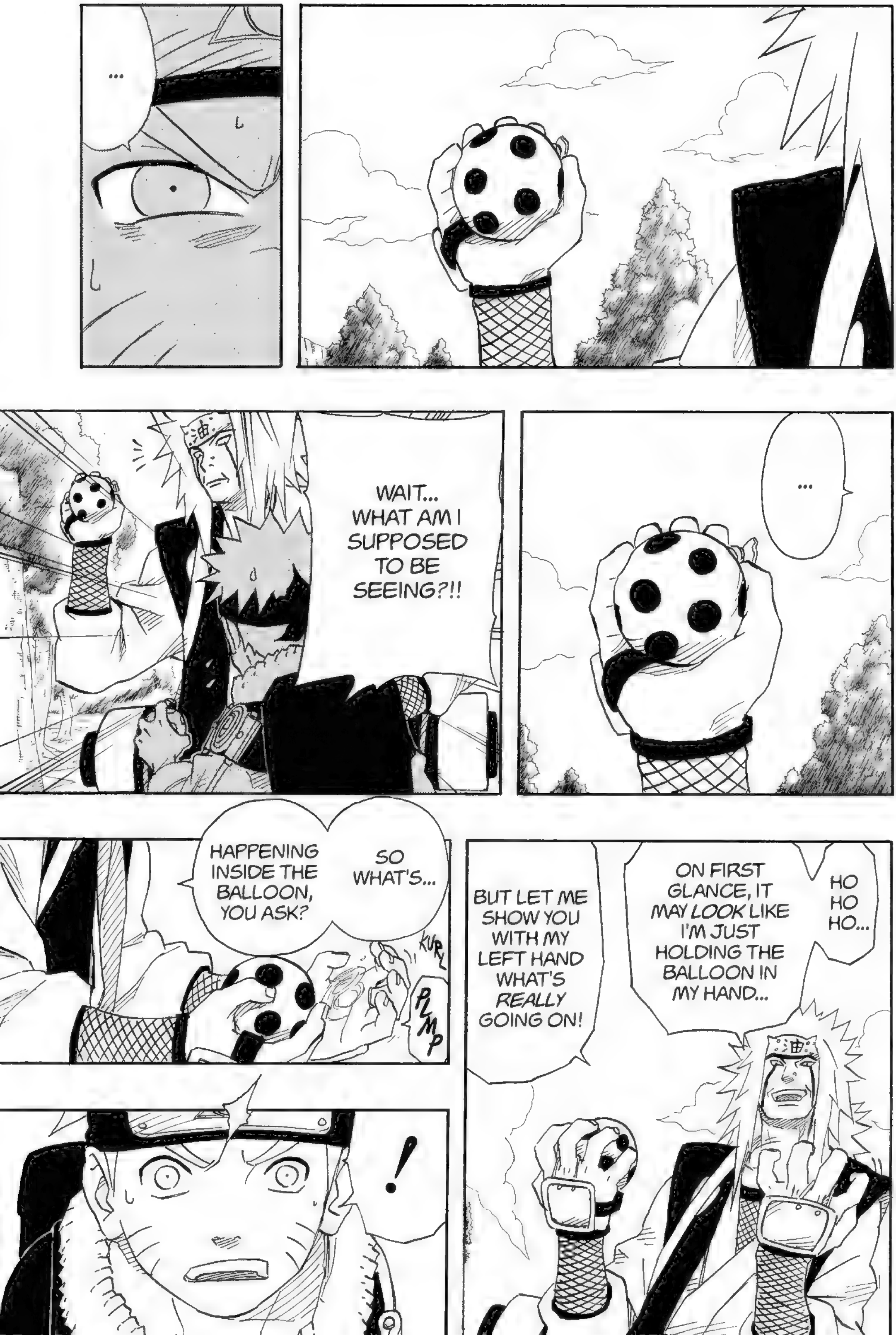

ALL RIGHT, LET'S GO!
...
...QUIT ACTING LIKE A LITTLE KID. LET'S GO, PULEEZ.
HUH...?
YOU'RE IN A FOUL MOOD...

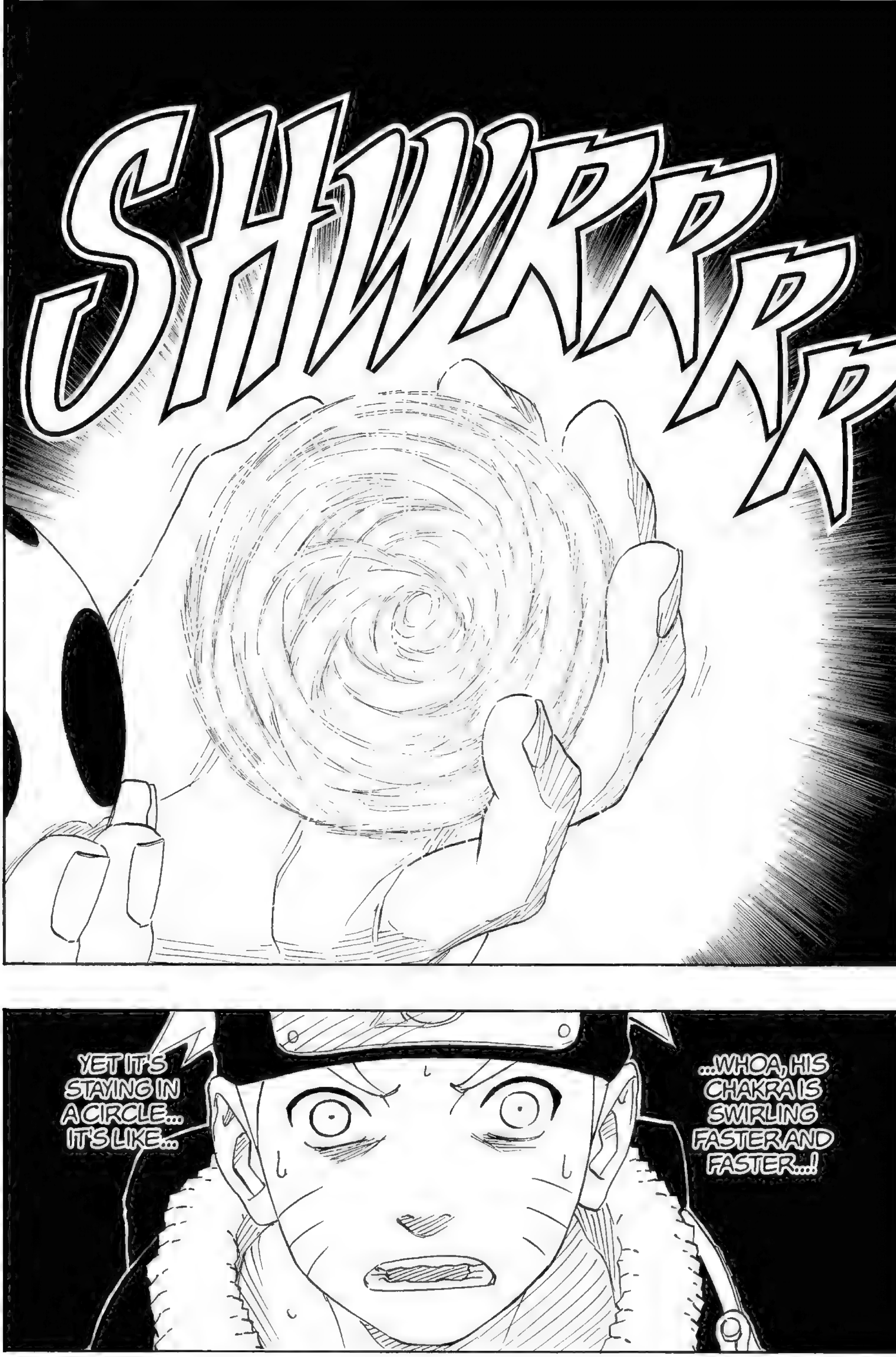
READ THIS WAY

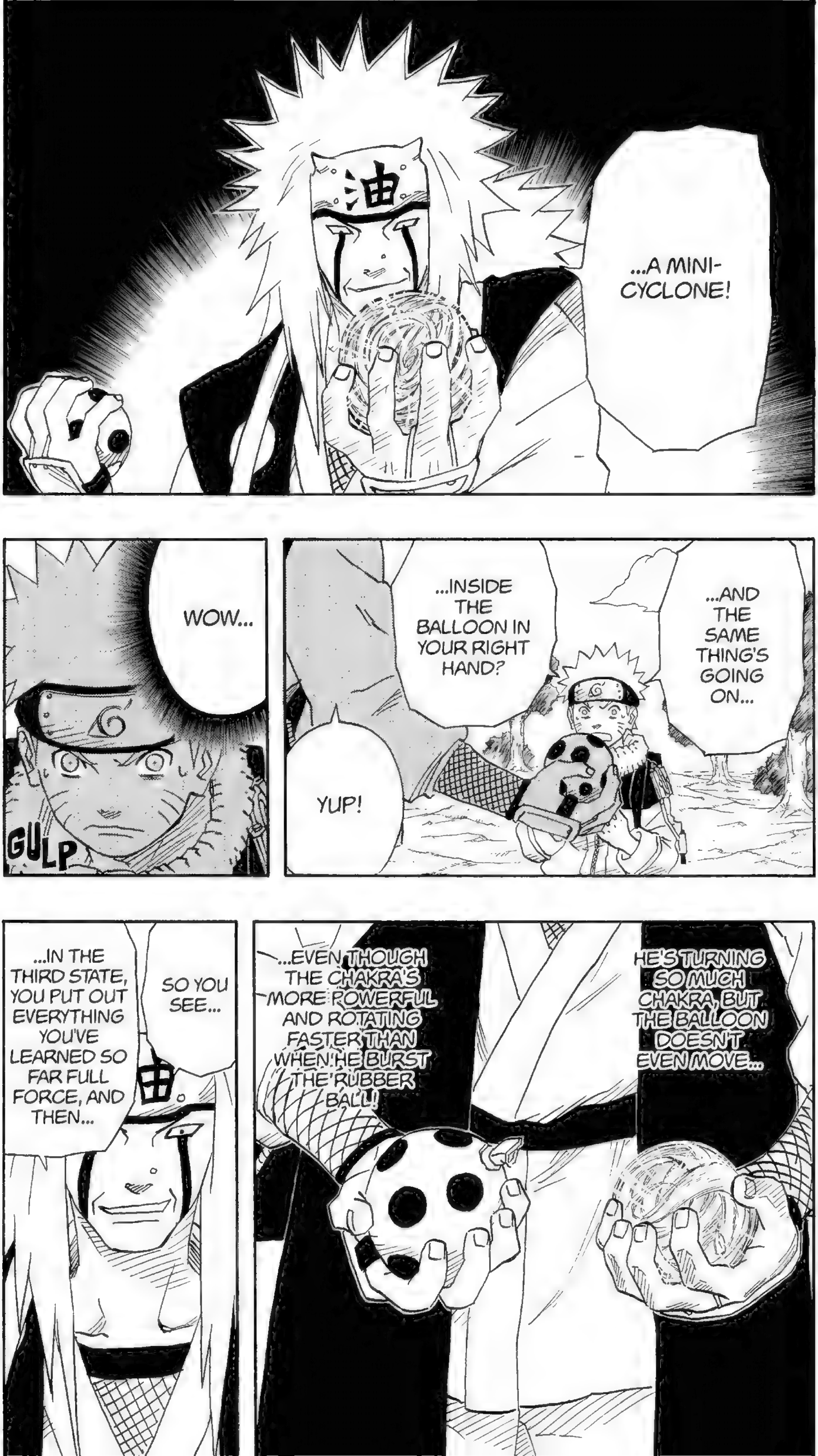

WELL! WHY NOT?
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF TRAINING!!
YOU SAID THERE WERE THREE STATES TO THIS DRILL, RIGHT?!
JAB
I'VE ONLY GOTTEN THROUGH TWO OF THEM SO FAR!
HO HO HO...
YOU CAN PRACTICE THE THIRD STATE EVEN WHILE WALKING.
SRCH SRCH
HUH?!
REALLY?!
PWUUU
HERE.
PONK
!
?!
A BALLOON?

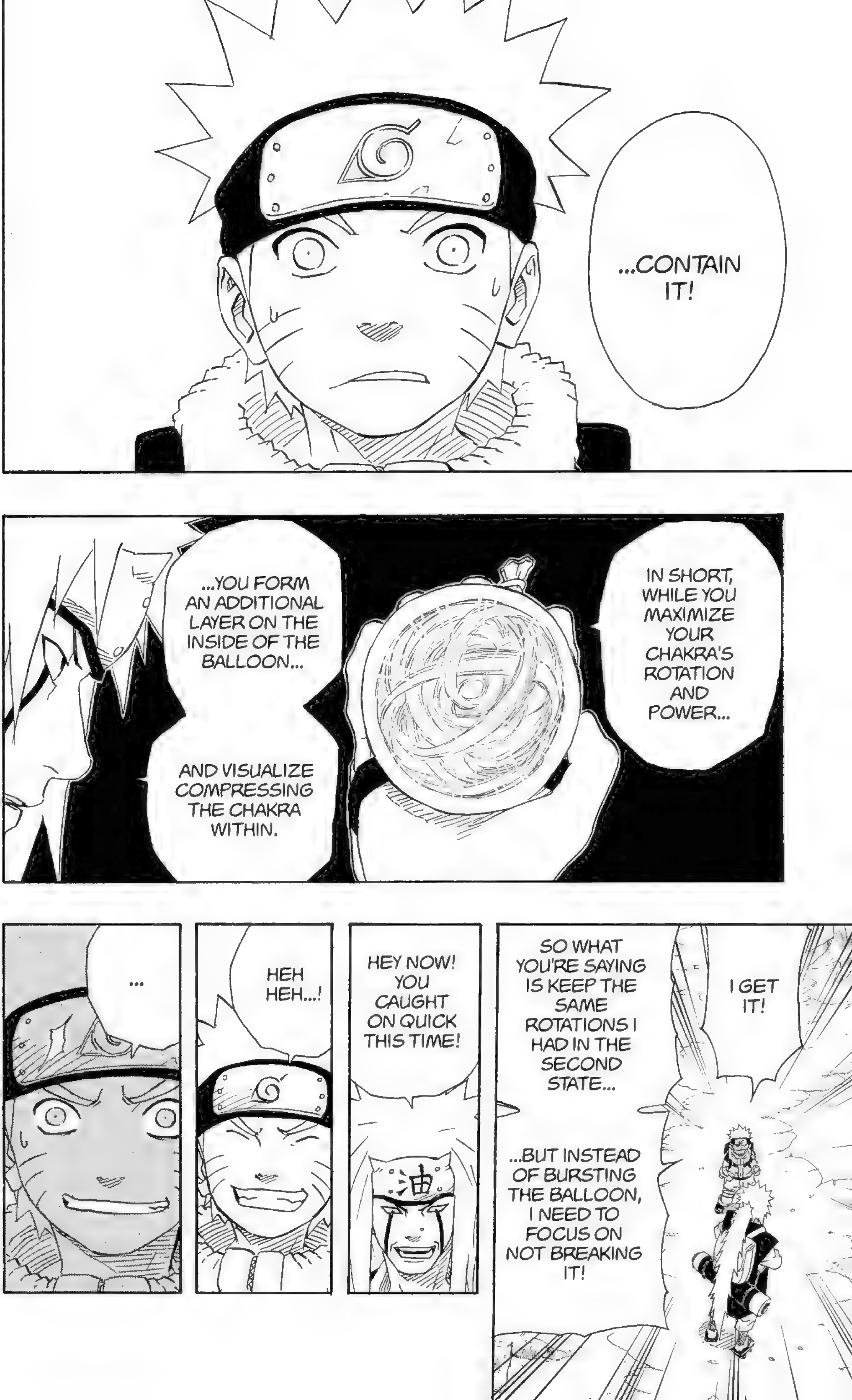

HUH?
CLAP
WHAT'S THIS...AN ORDINARY BALLOON...?
BOINN
THE FIRST STATE WAS ROTATION...
...AND THE SECOND STATE, POWER.
AND NOW *THIS* IS THE THIRD STATE!
PFFT
MMM

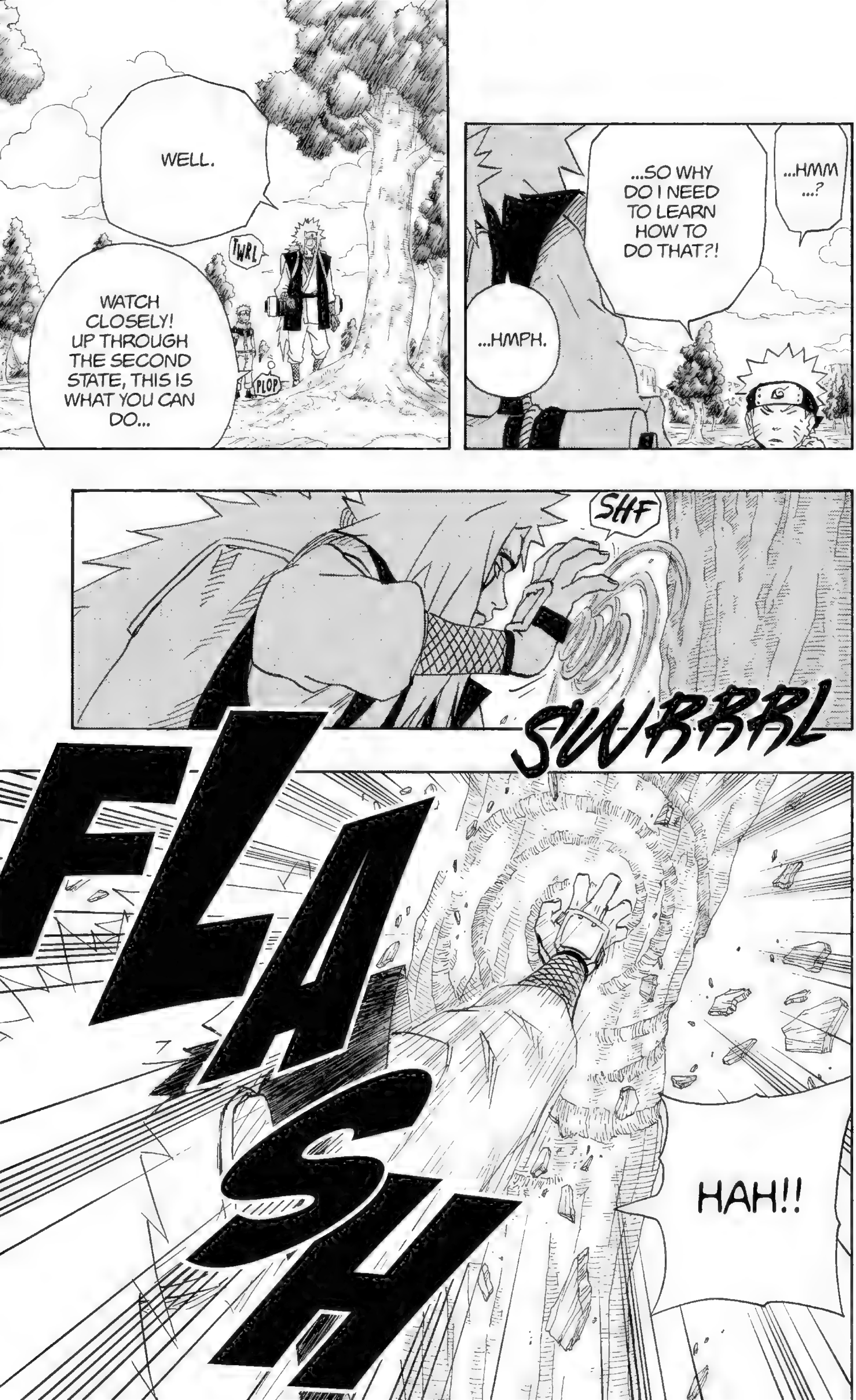
READ THIS WAY

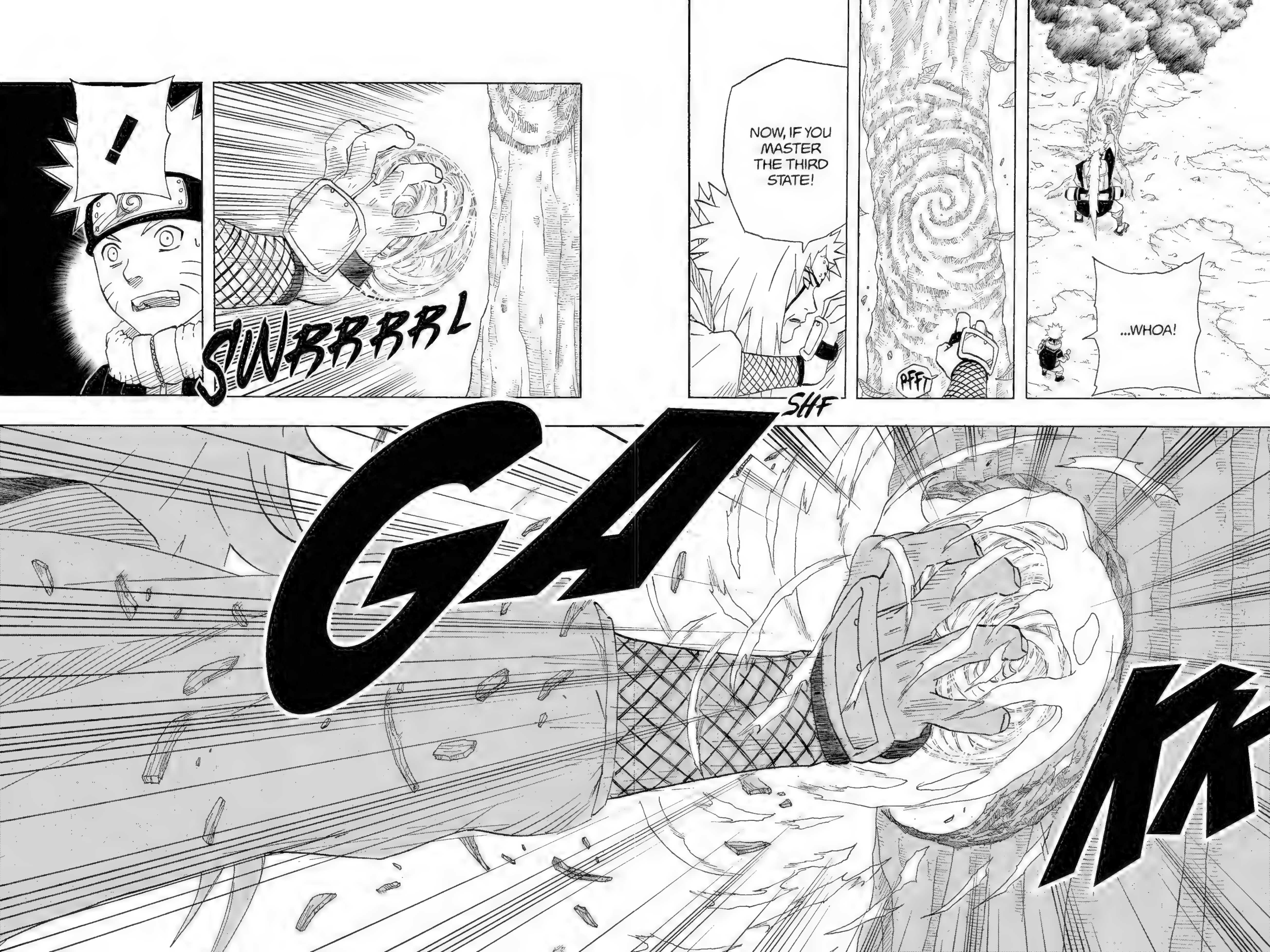

...
...
WAIT... WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO BE SEEING?!!
HO HO HO...
ON FIRST GLANCE, IT MAY *LOOK* LIKE I'M JUST HOLDING THE BALLOON IN MY HAND...
BUT LET ME SHOW YOU WITH MY LEFT HAND WHAT'S *REALLY* GOING ON!
SO WHAT'S...
HAPPENING INSIDE THE BALLOON, YOU ASK?
KURL
PLMP
!

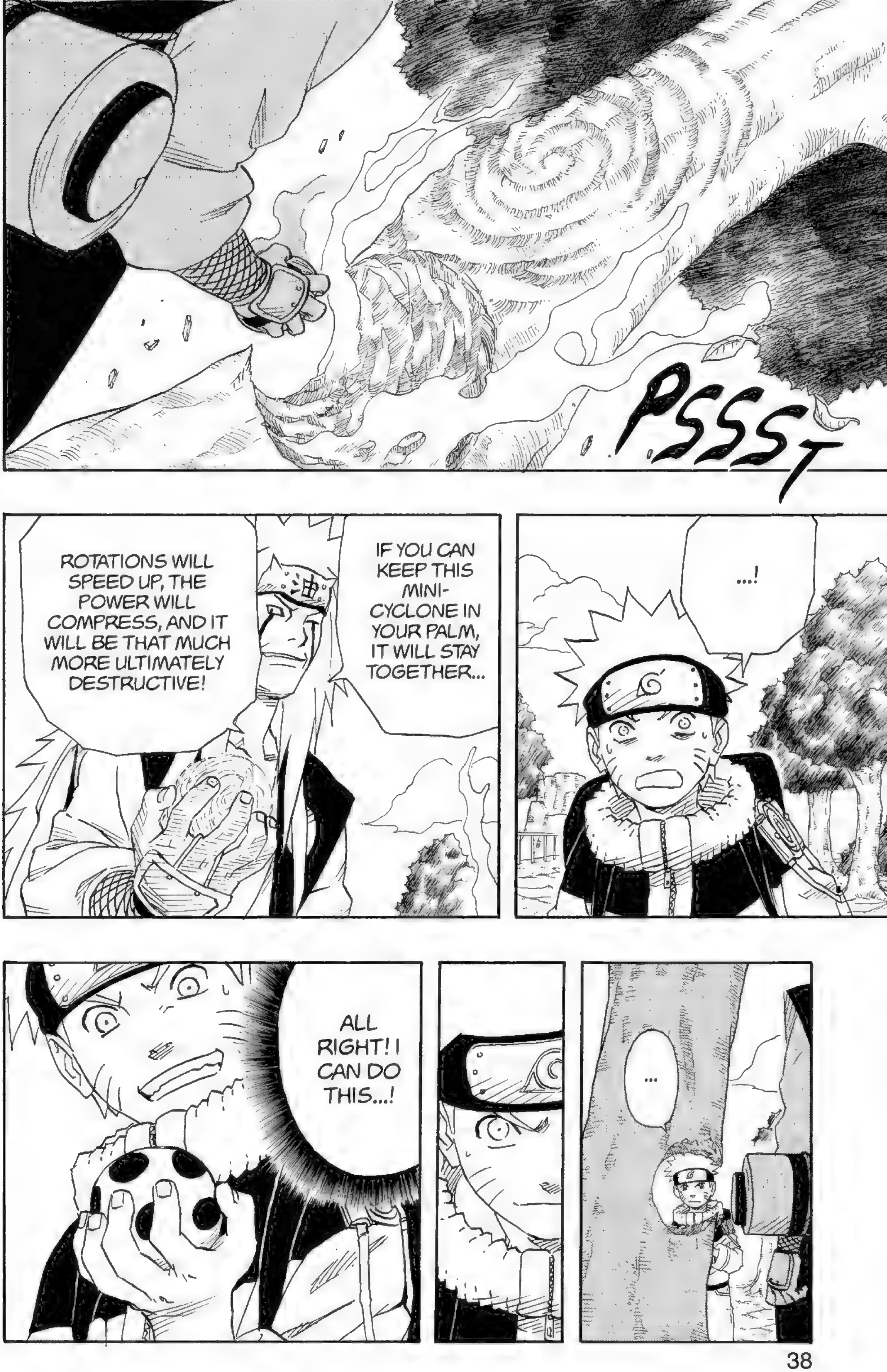

SHWRRRR
...WHOA, HIS CHAKRA IS SWIRLING FASTER AND FASTER...!
YET IT'S STAYING IN A CIRCLE... IT'S LIKE...

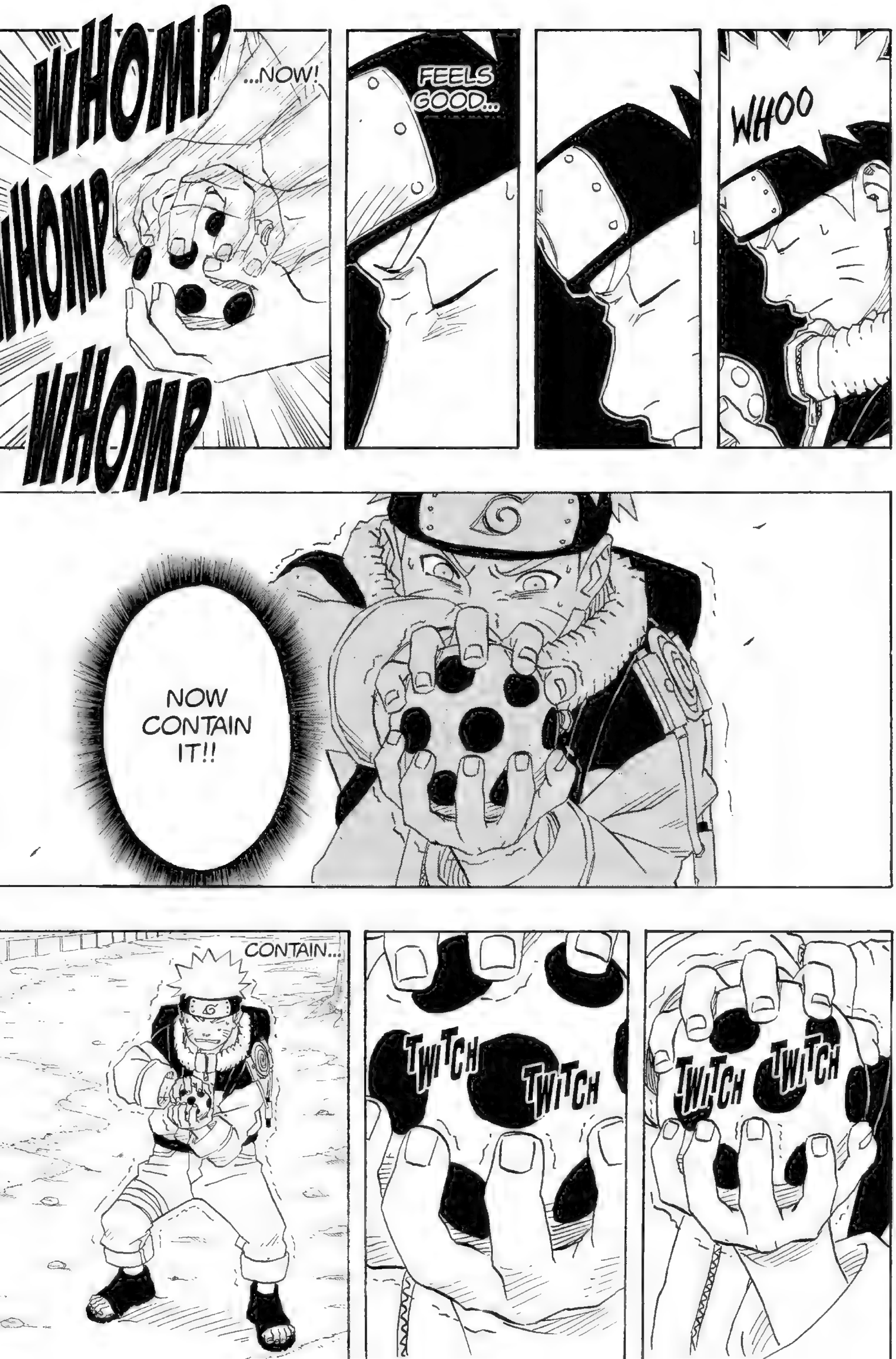

油
...A MINI-CYCLONE!
...AND THE SAME THING'S GOING ON...
...INSIDE THE BALLOON IN YOUR RIGHT HAND?
YUP!
WOW...
GULP
HE'S TURNING SO MUCH CHAKRA, BUT THE BALLOON DOESN'T EVEN MOVE...
...EVEN THOUGH THE CHAKRA'S MORE POWERFUL AND ROTATING FASTER THAN WHEN HE BURST THE RUBBER BALL!
SO YOU SEE...
...IN THE THIRD STATE, YOU PUT OUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE LEARNED SO FAR FULL FORCE, AND THEN...
油

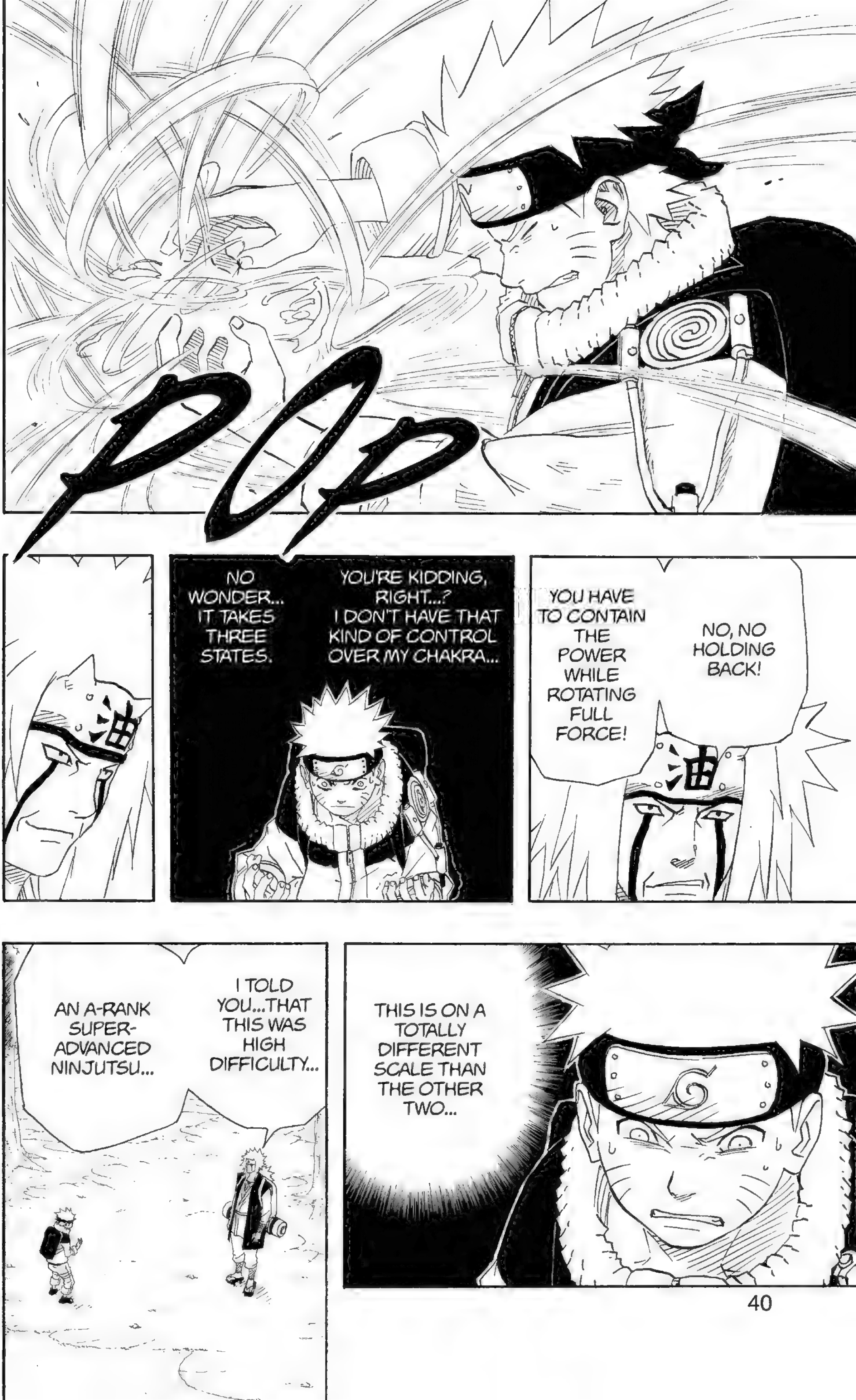

...CONTAIN IT!
IN SHORT, WHILE YOU MAXIMIZE YOUR CHAKRA'S ROTATION AND POWER...
...YOU FORM AN ADDITIONAL LAYER ON THE INSIDE OF THE BALLOON...
AND VISUALIZE COMPRESSING THE CHAKRA WITHIN.
I GET IT!
SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS KEEP THE SAME ROTATIONS I HAD IN THE SECOND STATE...
...BUT INSTEAD OF BURSTING THE BALLOON, I NEED TO FOCUS ON NOT BREAKING IT!
HEY NOW! YOU CAUGHT ON QUICK THIS TIME!
油
HEH HEH...!
...


...HMM ...?
...SO WHY DO I NEED TO LEARN HOW TO DO THAT?!
...HMPH.
WELL.
TWRL
WATCH CLOSELY! UP THROUGH THE SECOND STATE, THIS IS WHAT YOU CAN DO...
PLOP
SHF
SWRRRL
FLASH
HAH!!

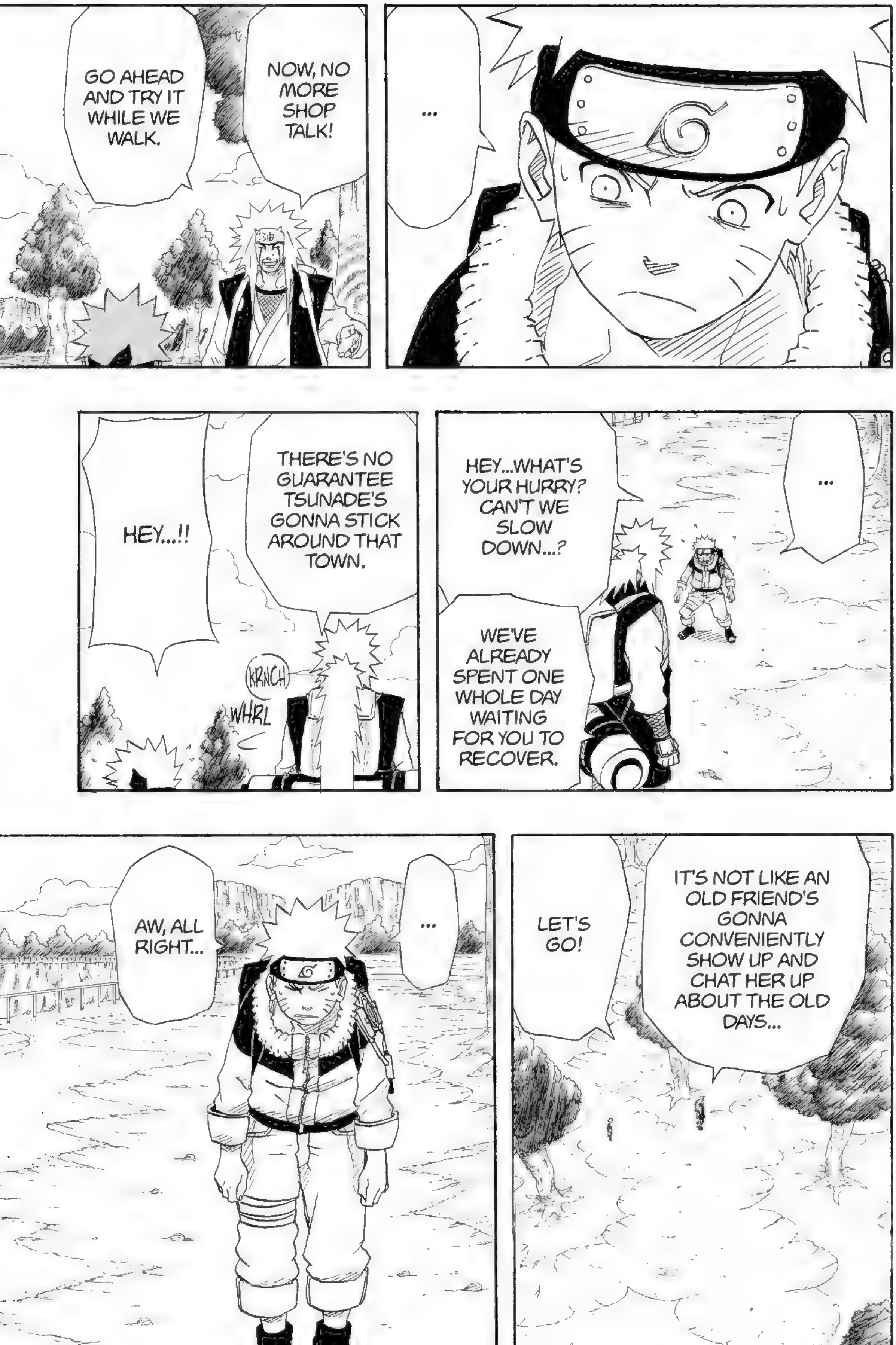

...WHOA!
PFFT
NOW, IF YOU MASTER THE THIRD STATE!
SHF
SWRRRRL
!
GA
KK

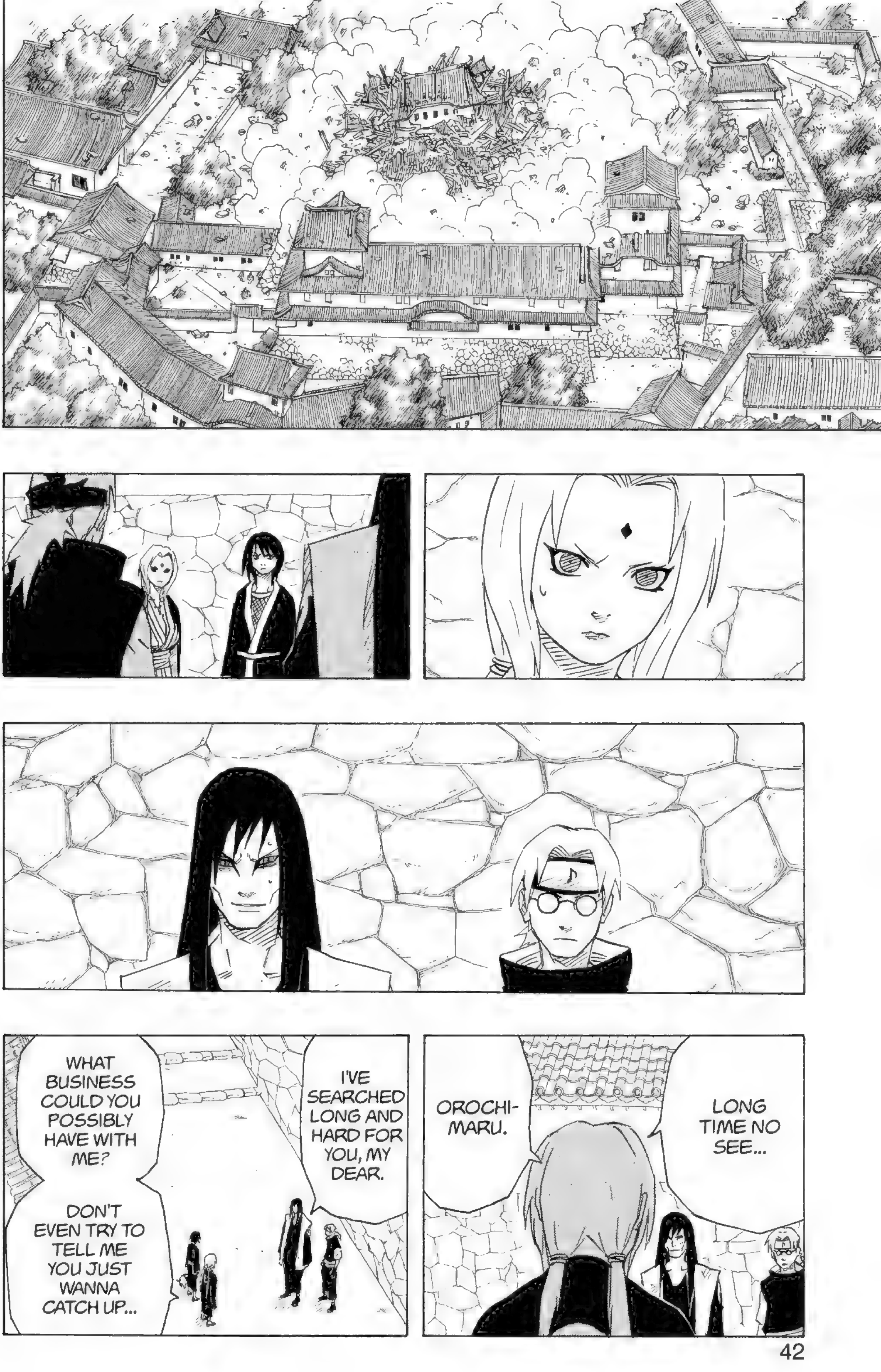

PSSST
...!
IF YOU CAN KEEP THIS MINI-CYCLONE IN YOUR PALM, IT WILL STAY TOGETHER...
ROTATIONS WILL SPEED UP, THE POWER WILL COMPRESS, AND IT WILL BE THAT MUCH MORE ULTIMATELY DESTRUCTIVE!
...
ALL RIGHT! I CAN DO THIS...!


WHOO
FEELS GOOD...
...NOW!
WHOMP
WHOMP
WHOMP
NOW CONTAIN IT!!
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
CONTAIN...

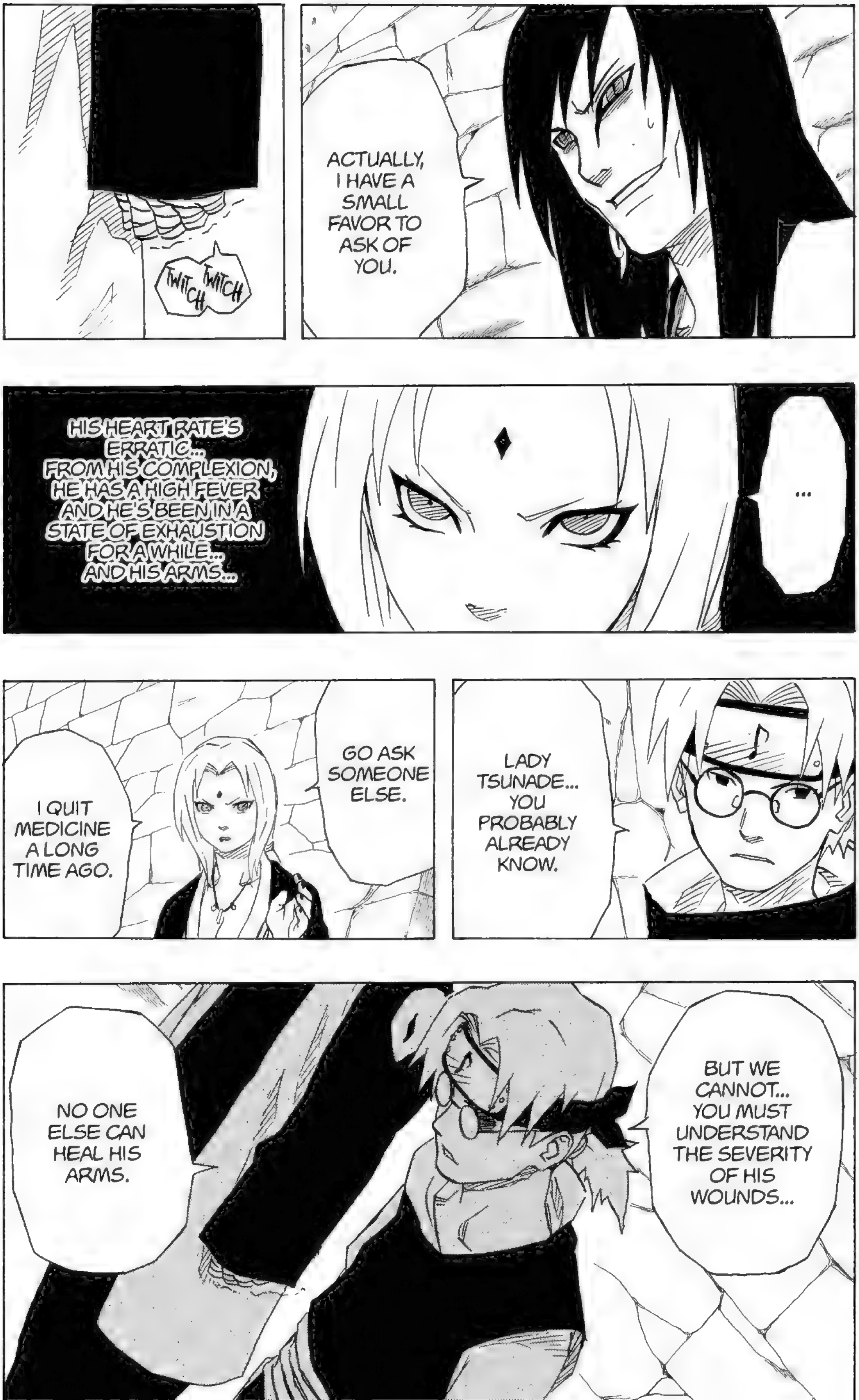

POP
NO, NO HOLDING BACK!
YOU HAVE TO CONTAIN THE POWER WHILE ROTATING FULL FORCE!
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT...? I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF CONTROL OVER MY CHAKRA...
NO WONDER... IT TAKES THREE STATES.
THIS IS ON A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SCALE THAN THE OTHER TWO...
I TOLD YOU...THAT THIS WAS HIGH DIFFICULTY...
AN A-RANK SUPER-ADVANCED NINJUTSU...

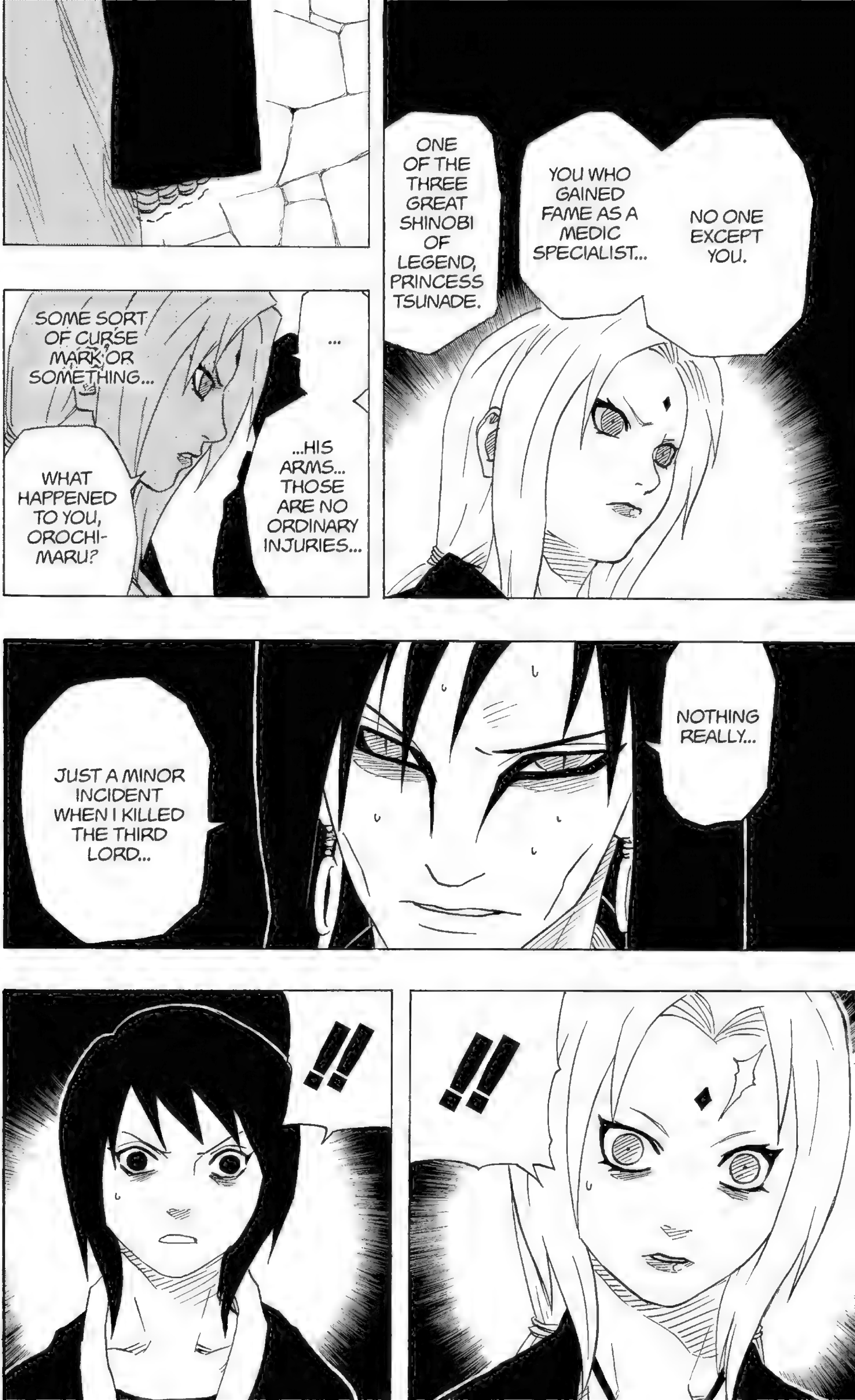
READ THIS WAY

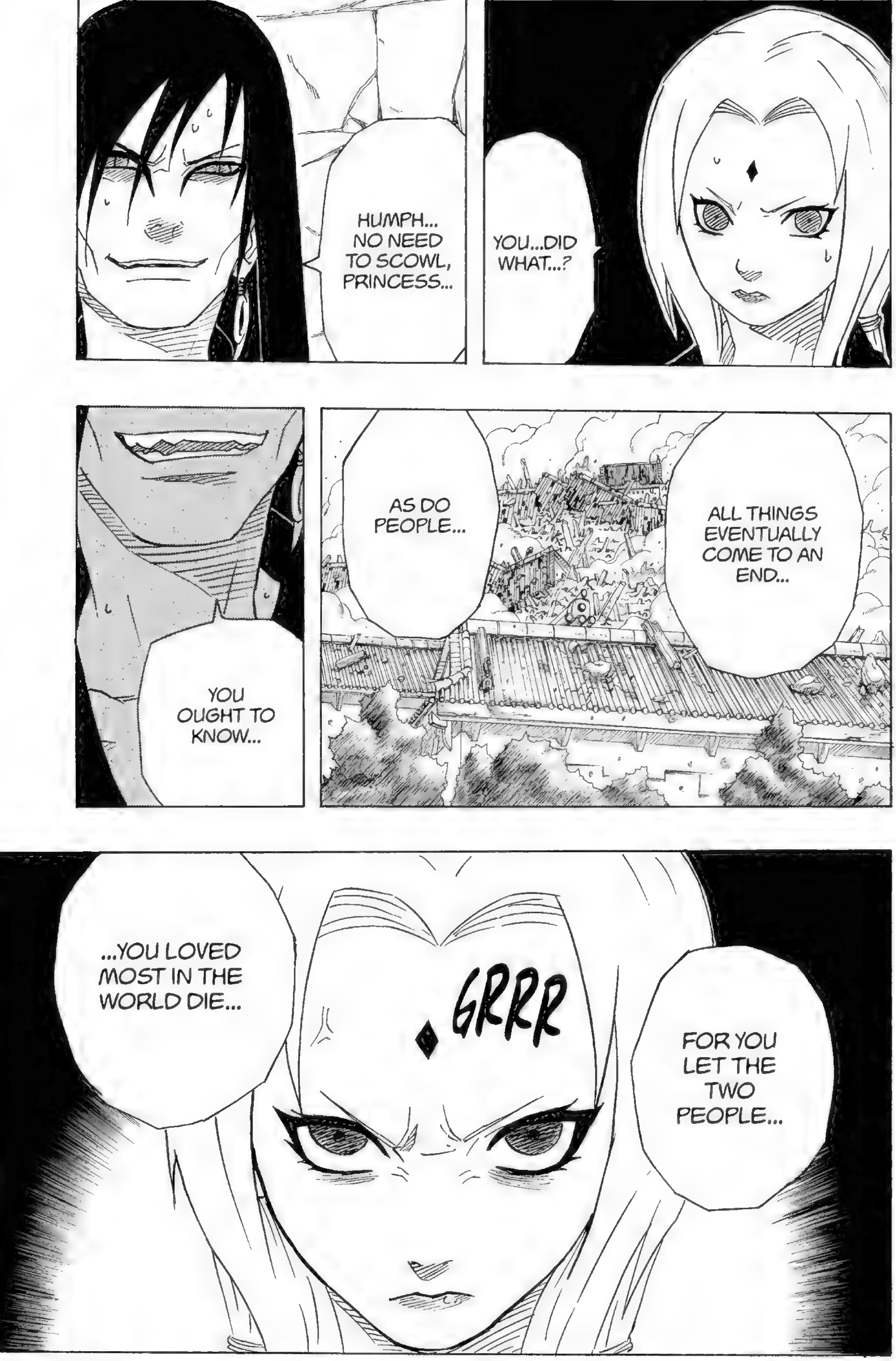

...
NOW, NO MORE SHOP TALK!
GO AHEAD AND TRY IT WHILE WE WALK.
...
HEY...WHAT'S YOUR HURRY? CAN'T WE SLOW DOWN...?
WE'VE ALREADY SPENT ONE WHOLE DAY WAITING FOR YOU TO RECOVER.
THERE'S NO GUARANTEE TSUNADE'S GONNA STICK AROUND THAT TOWN.
HEY...!!
KRNCH
WHRL
IT'S NOT LIKE AN OLD FRIEND'S GONNA CONVENIENTLY SHOW UP AND CHAT HER UP ABOUT THE OLD DAYS...
LET'S GO!
...
AW, ALL RIGHT...


LONG TIME NO SEE...
OROCHI-MARU.
I'VE SEARCHED LONG AND HARD FOR YOU, MY DEAR.
WHAT BUSINESS COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE WITH ME?
DON'T EVEN TRY TO TELL ME YOU JUST WANNA CATCH UP...

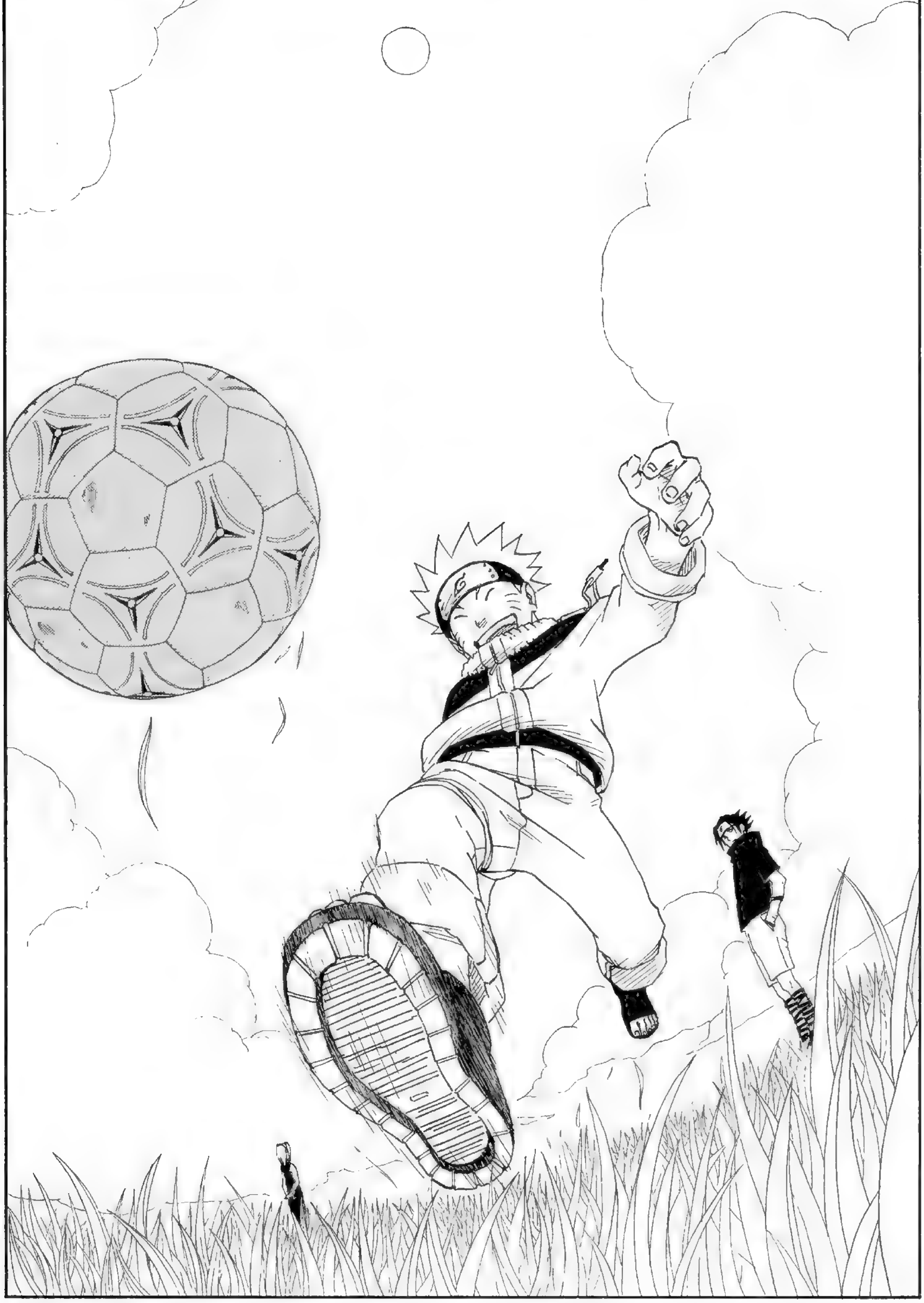
READ THIS WAY

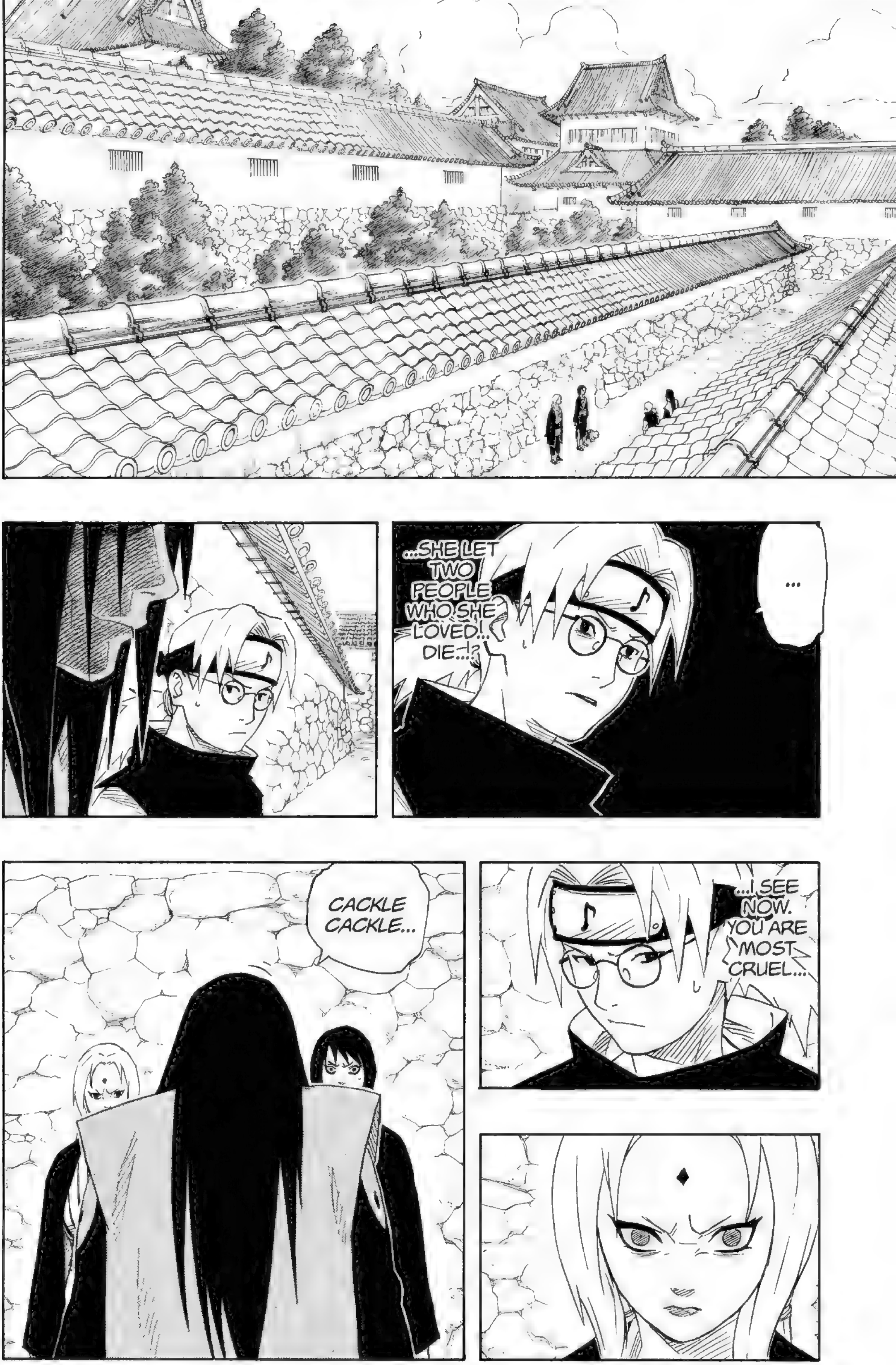

ACTUALLY, I HAVE A SMALL FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU.
TWITCH TWITCH
...
HIS HEART RATE'S ERRATIC... FROM HIS COMPLEXION, HE HAS A HIGH FEVER AND HE'S BEEN IN A STATE OF EXHAUSTION FOR A WHILE... AND HIS ARMS...
LADY TSUNADE... YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW.
GO ASK SOMEONE ELSE.
I QUIT MEDICINE A LONG TIME AGO.
BUT WE CANNOT... YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE SEVERITY OF HIS WOUNDS...
NO ONE ELSE CAN HEAL HIS ARMS.

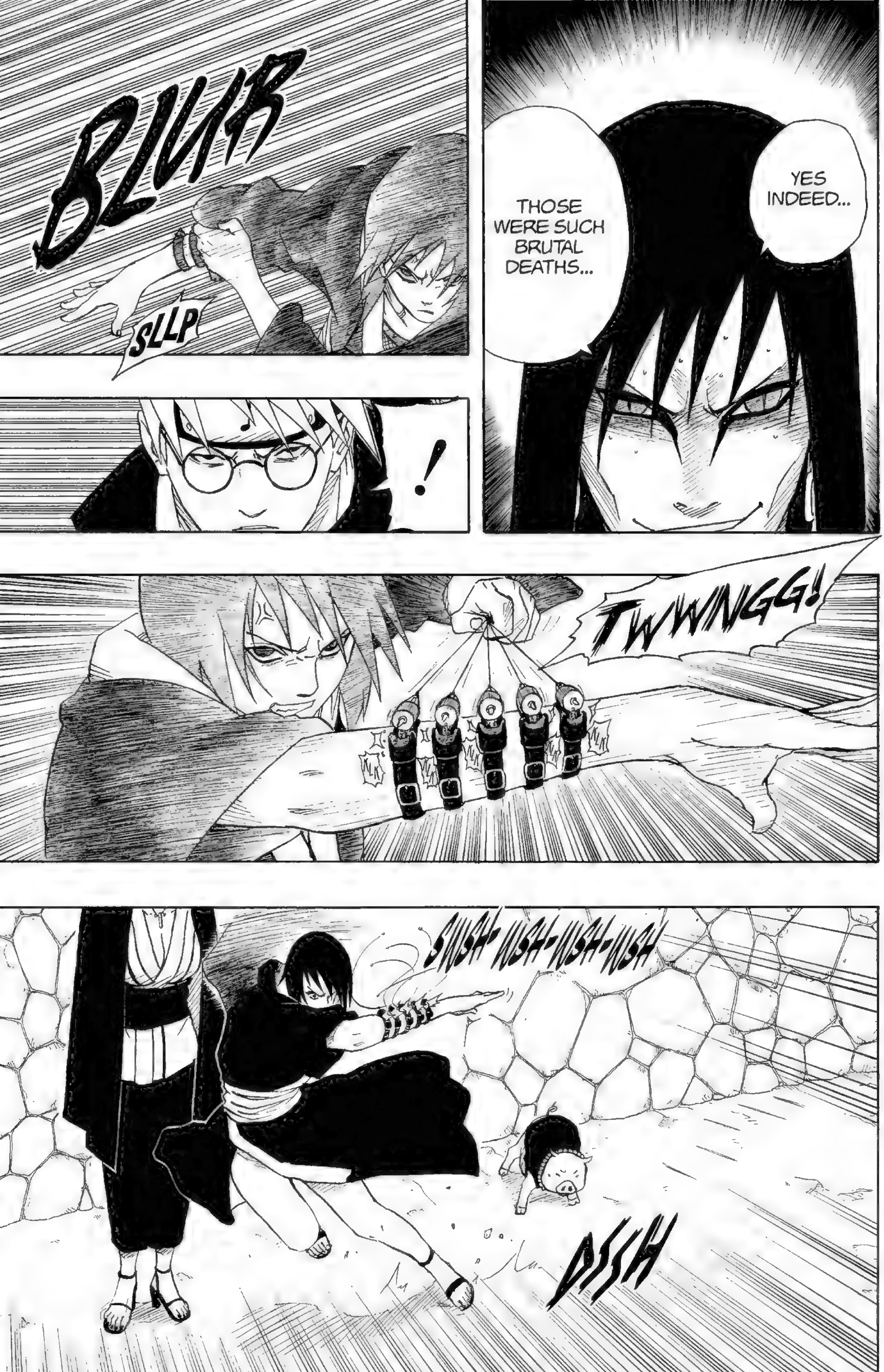

NO ONE EXCEPT YOU.
YOU WHO GAINED FAME AS A MEDIC SPECIALIST...
ONE OF THE THREE GREAT SHINOBI OF LEGEND, PRINCESS TSUNADE.
...
...HIS ARMS... THOSE ARE NO ORDINARY INJURIES...
SOME SORT OF CURSE MARK OR SOMETHING...
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, OROCHIMARU?
NOTHING REALLY...
JUST A MINOR INCIDENT WHEN I KILLED THE THIRD LORD...
!!
!!

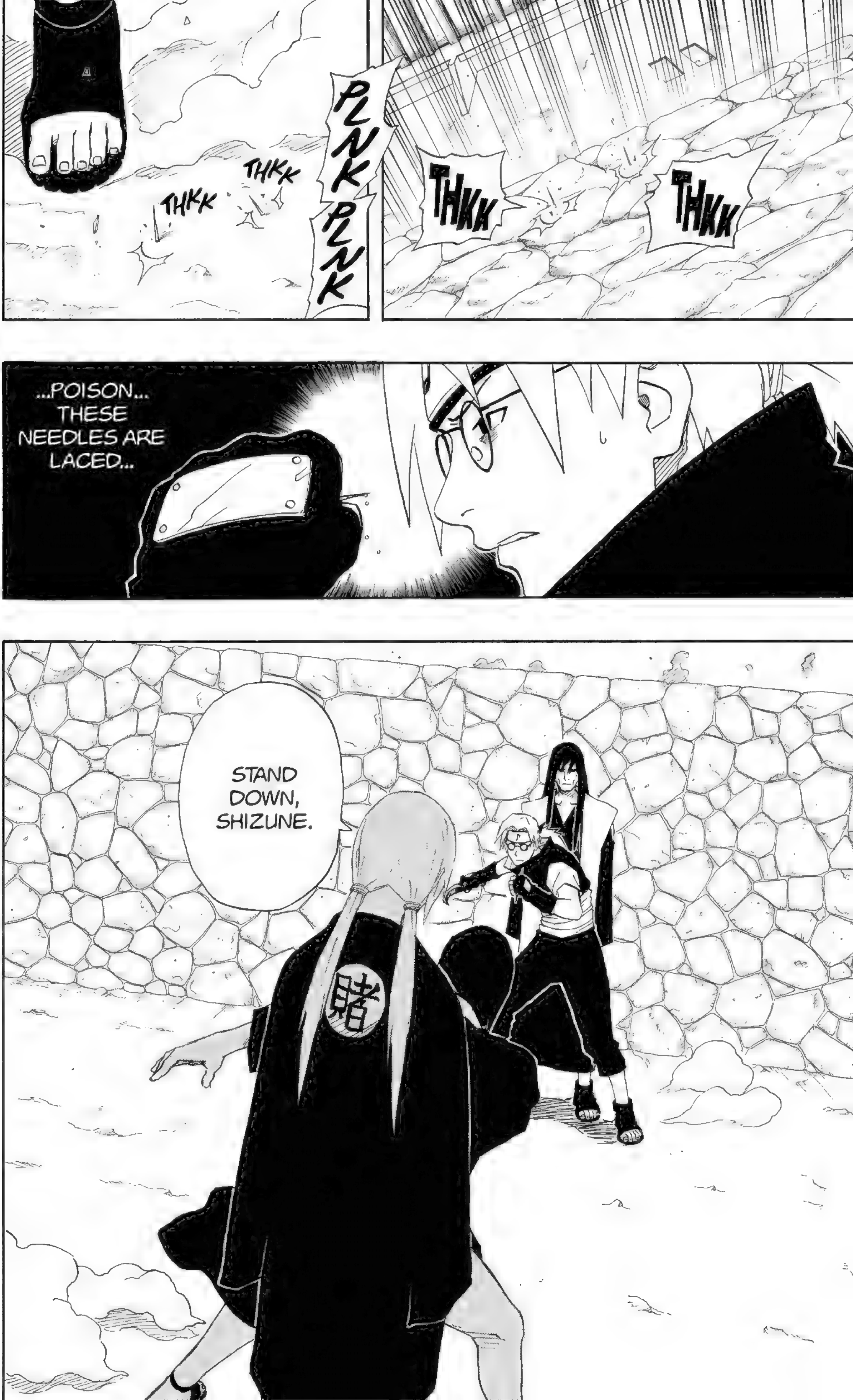

YOU...DID WHAT...?
HUMPH... NO NEED TO SCOWL, PRINCESS...
ALL THINGS EVENTUALLY COME TO AN END...
AS DO PEOPLE...
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW...
FOR YOU LET THE TWO PEOPLE...
...YOU LOVED MOST IN THE WORLD DIE...
GRRR

Number 156: The Offer

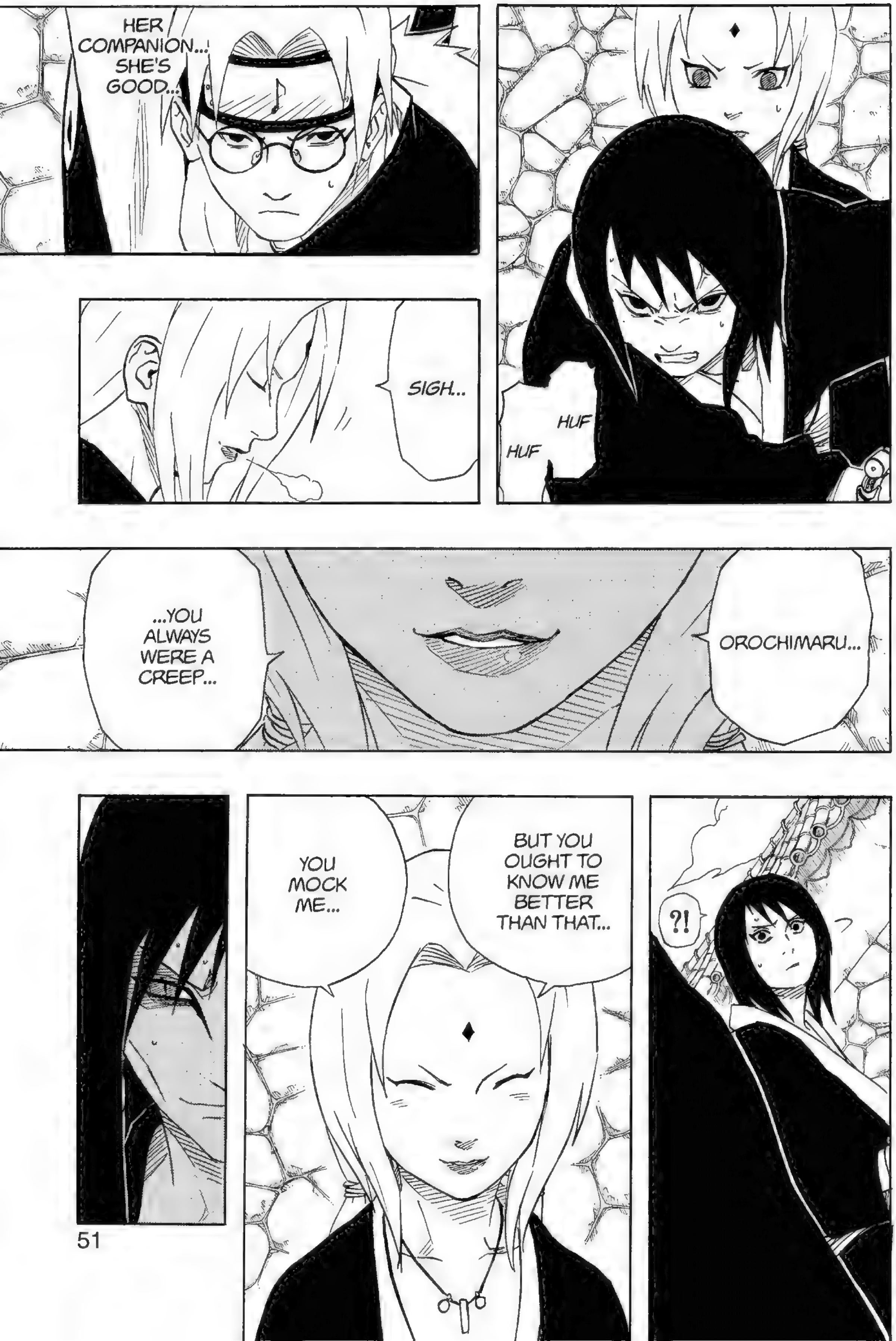


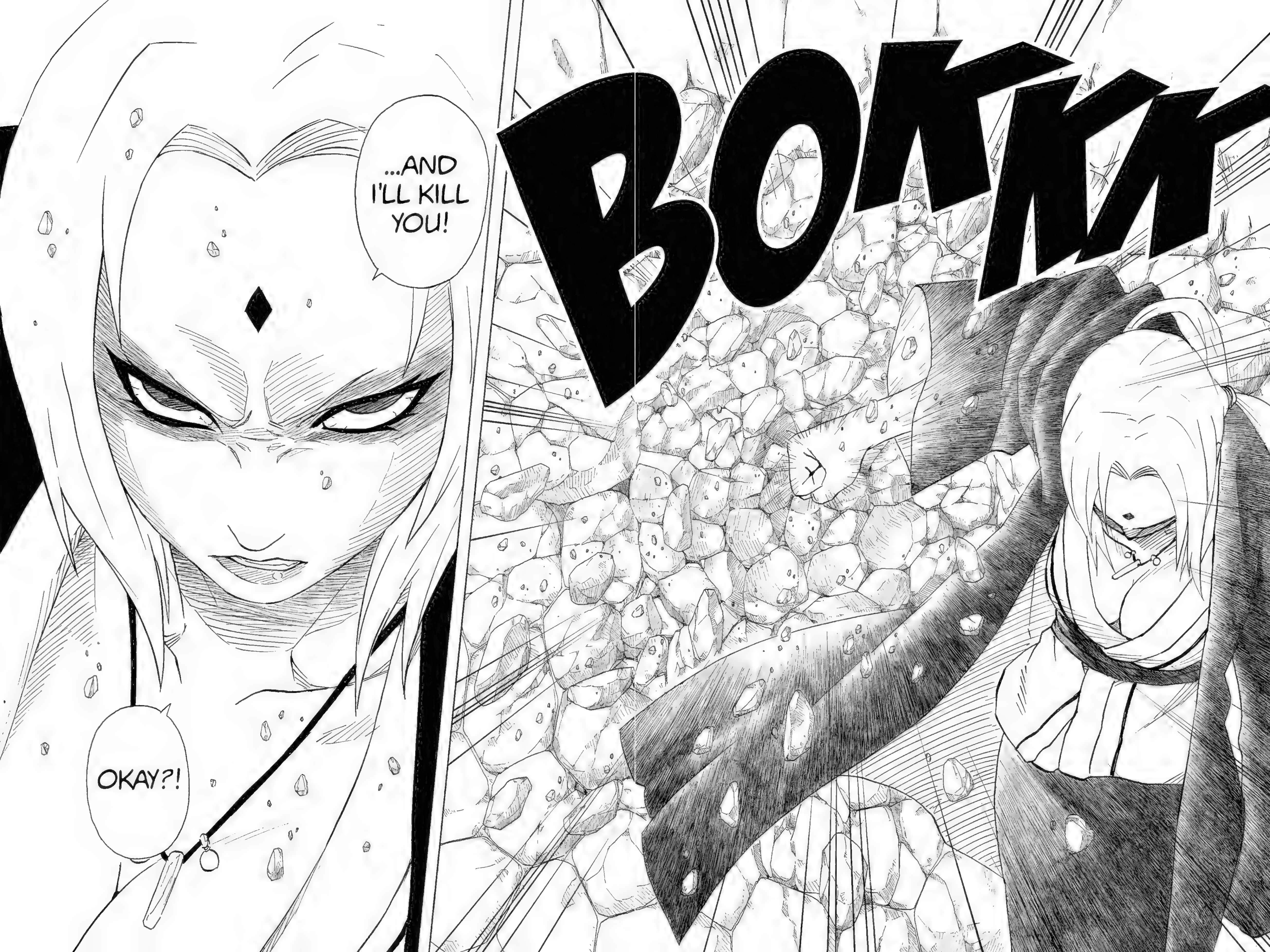

...
...SHE LET TWO PEOPLE WHO SHE LOVED!... DIE...!?
...I SEE NOW. YOU ARE MOST CRUEL...
CACKLE CACKLE...

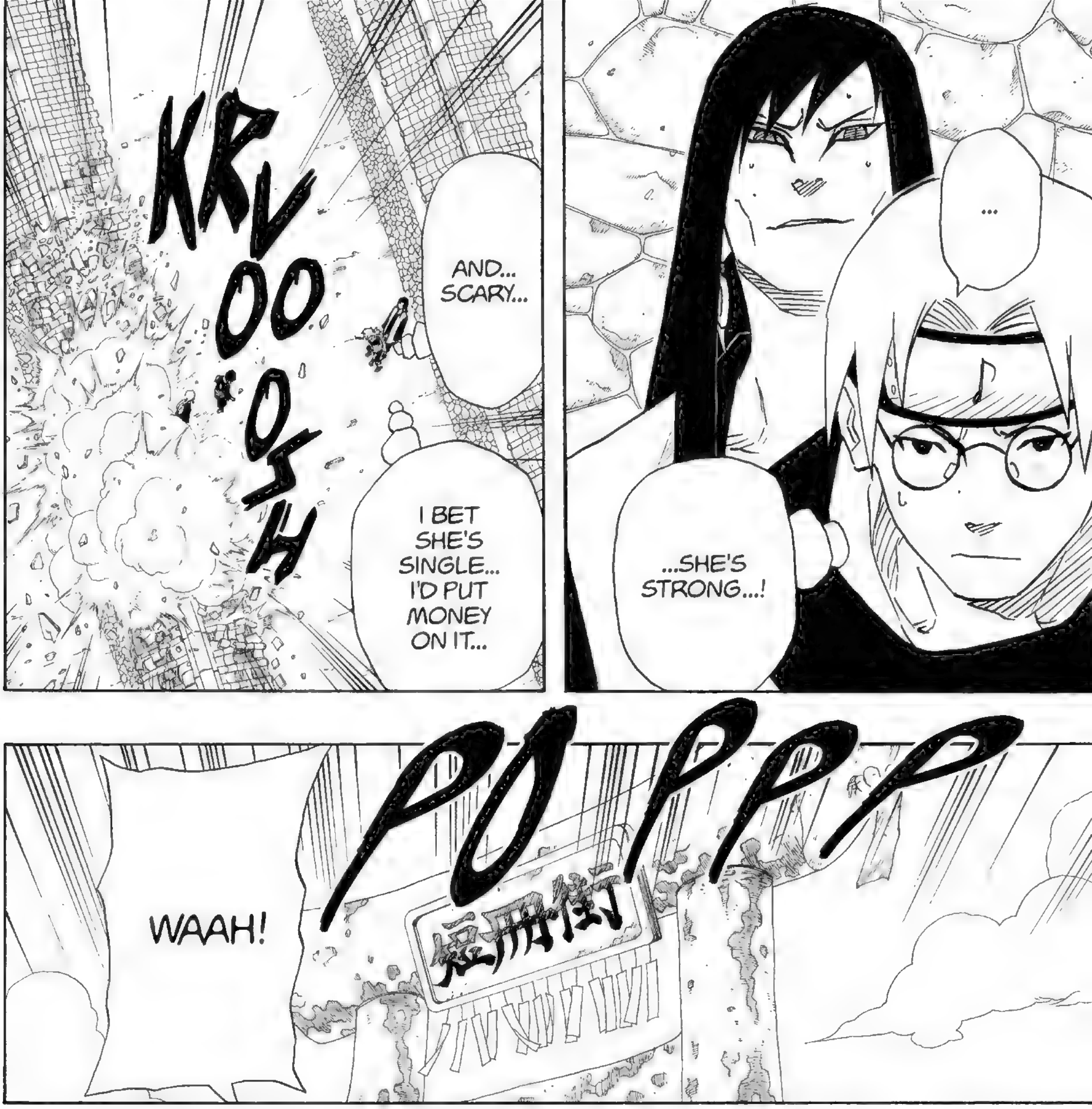

YES INDEED...
THOSE WERE SUCH BRUTAL DEATHS...
BLUR
SLLP
!
TWWNGG!
KLK
KLK
KLK
KLK
SWISH-WISH-WISH-WISH
DSSH


THKK
THKK
PLNK PLNK
THKK
THKK
...POISON... THESE NEEDLES ARE LACED...
STAND DOWN, SHIZUNE.

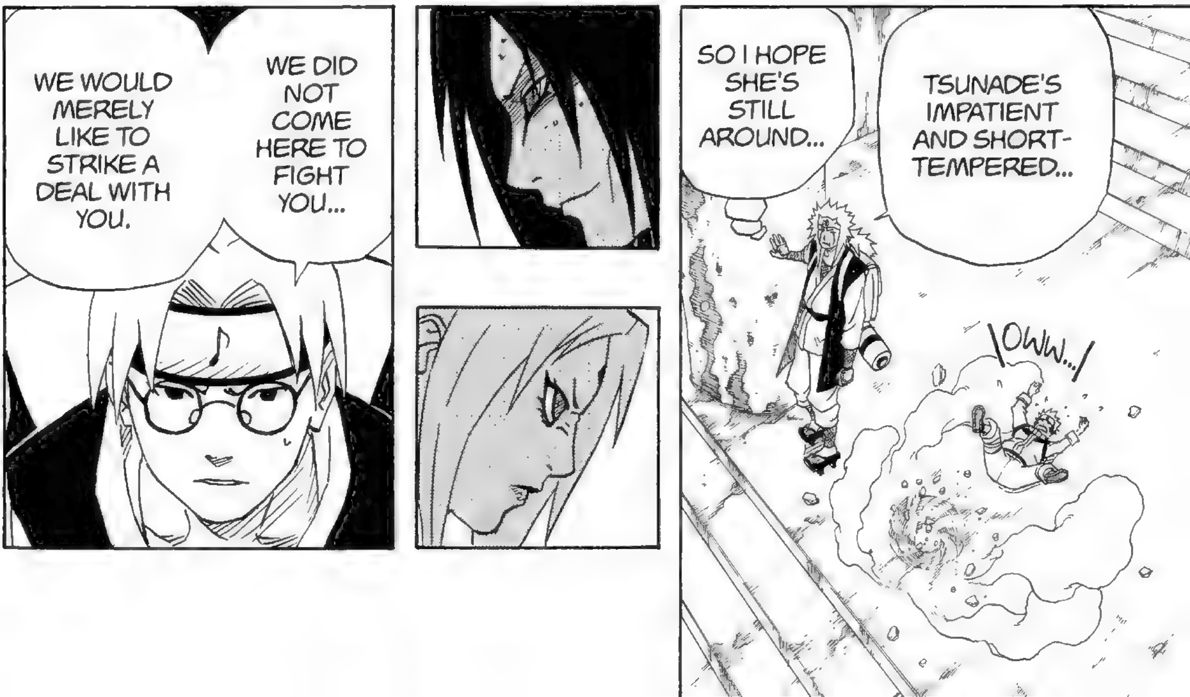
READ THIS WAY


HUF
HUF
HER COMPANION... SHE'S GOOD...
SIGH...
OROCHIMARU...
...YOU ALWAYS WERE A CREEP...
?!
YOU MOCK ME...
BUT YOU OUGHT TO KNOW ME BETTER THAN THAT...

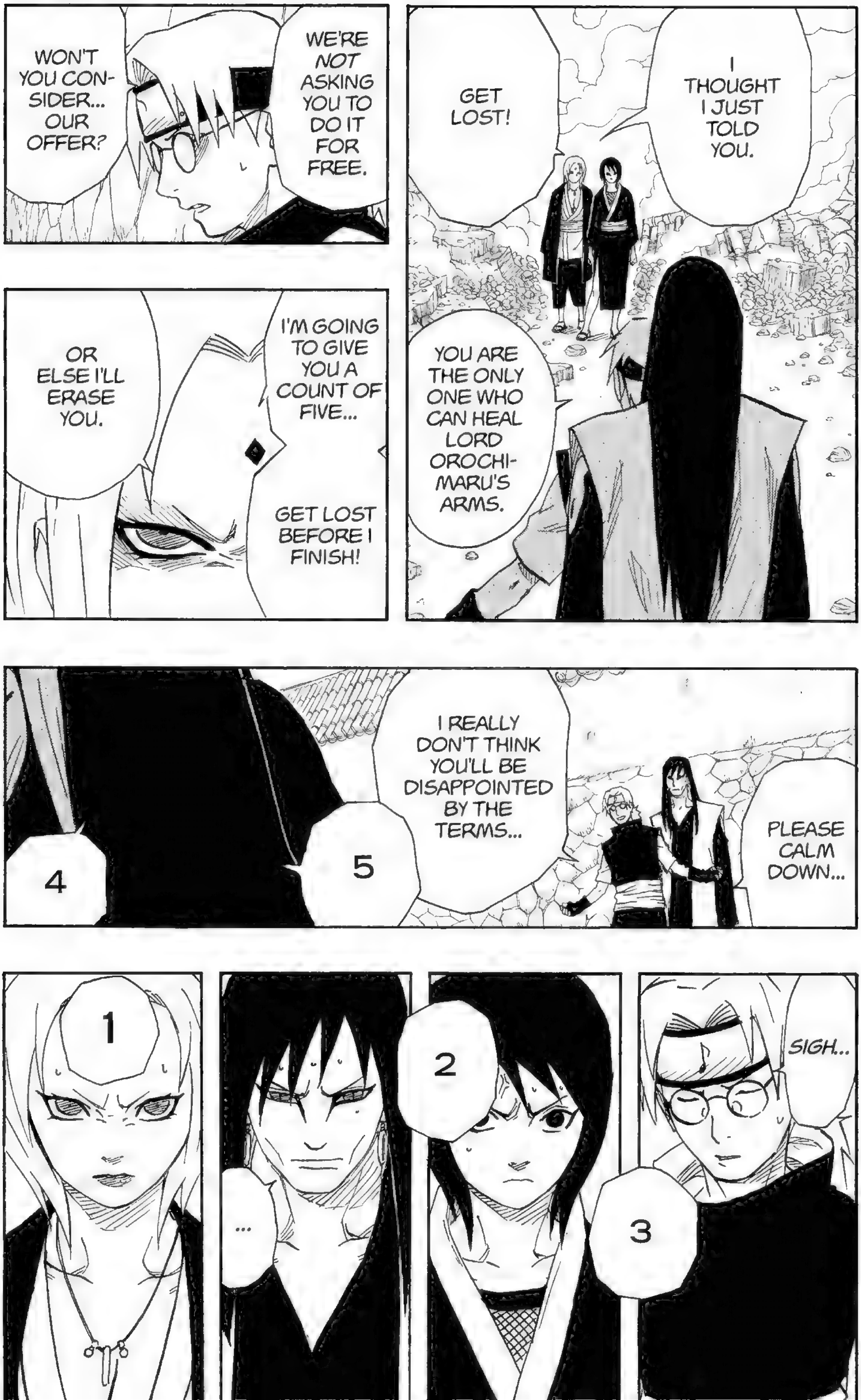

BOKK
...AND I'LL KILL YOU!
OKAY?!

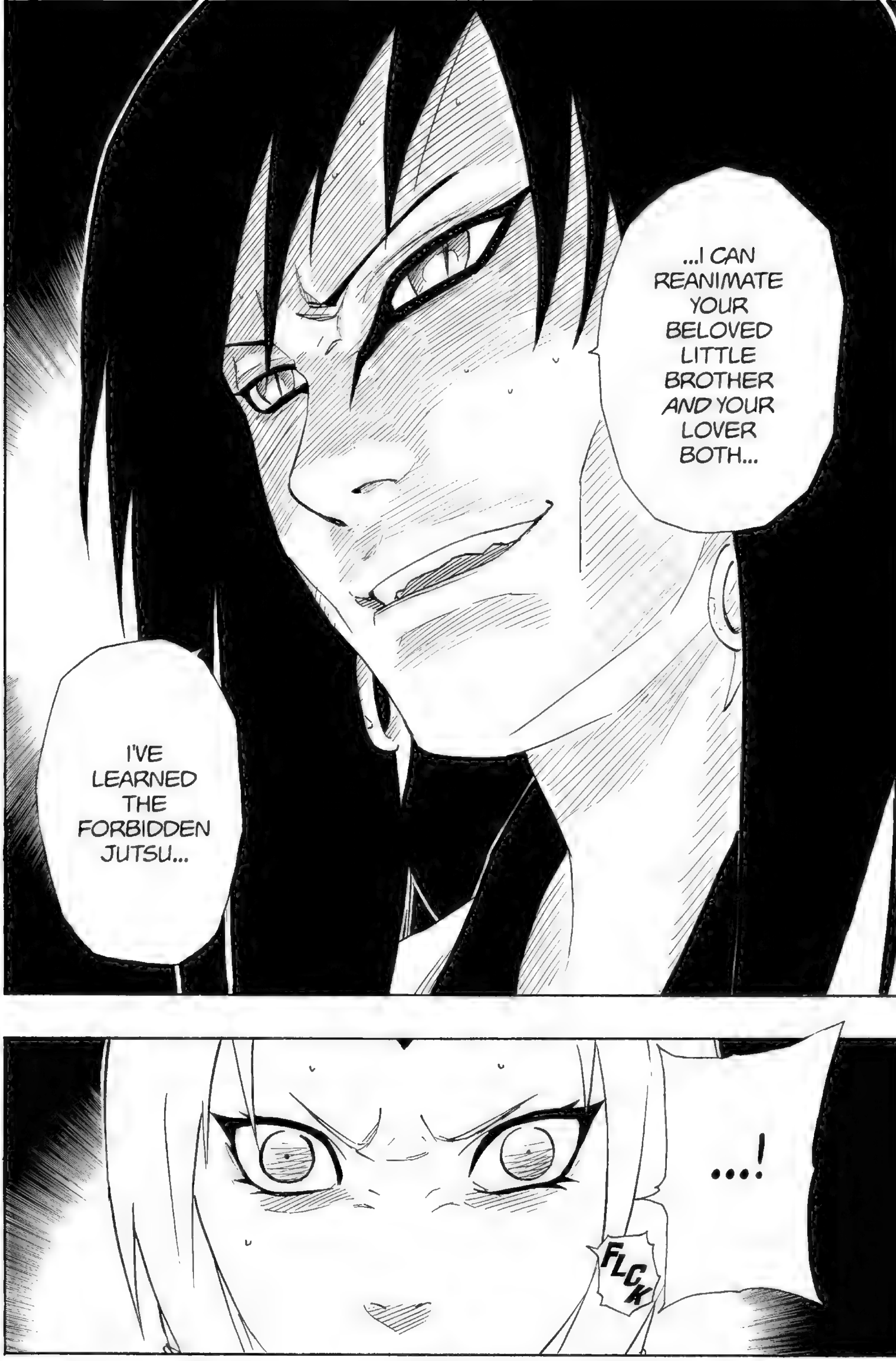

...
...SHE'S STRONG...!
AND... SCARY...
I BET SHE'S SINGLE... I'D PUT MONEY ON IT...
KRVOOOOSH
POPPP
短冊街
WAAH!

(Sign: Tanzaku Town)

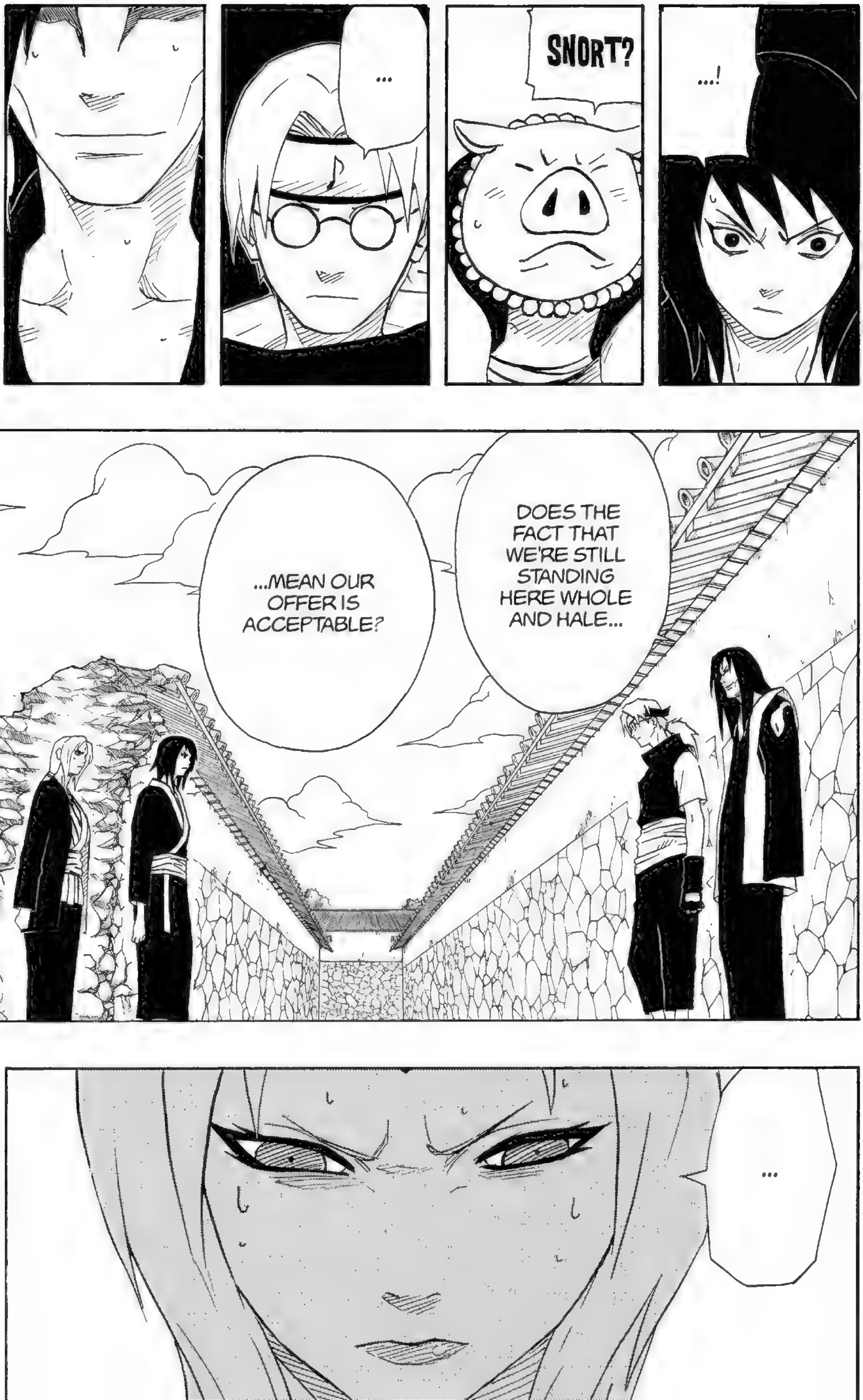

TSUNADE'S IMPATIENT AND SHORT-TEMPERED...
SO I HOPE SHE'S STILL AROUND...
OWW...!
WE DID NOT COME HERE TO FIGHT YOU...
WE WOULD MERELY LIKE TO STRIKE A DEAL WITH YOU.

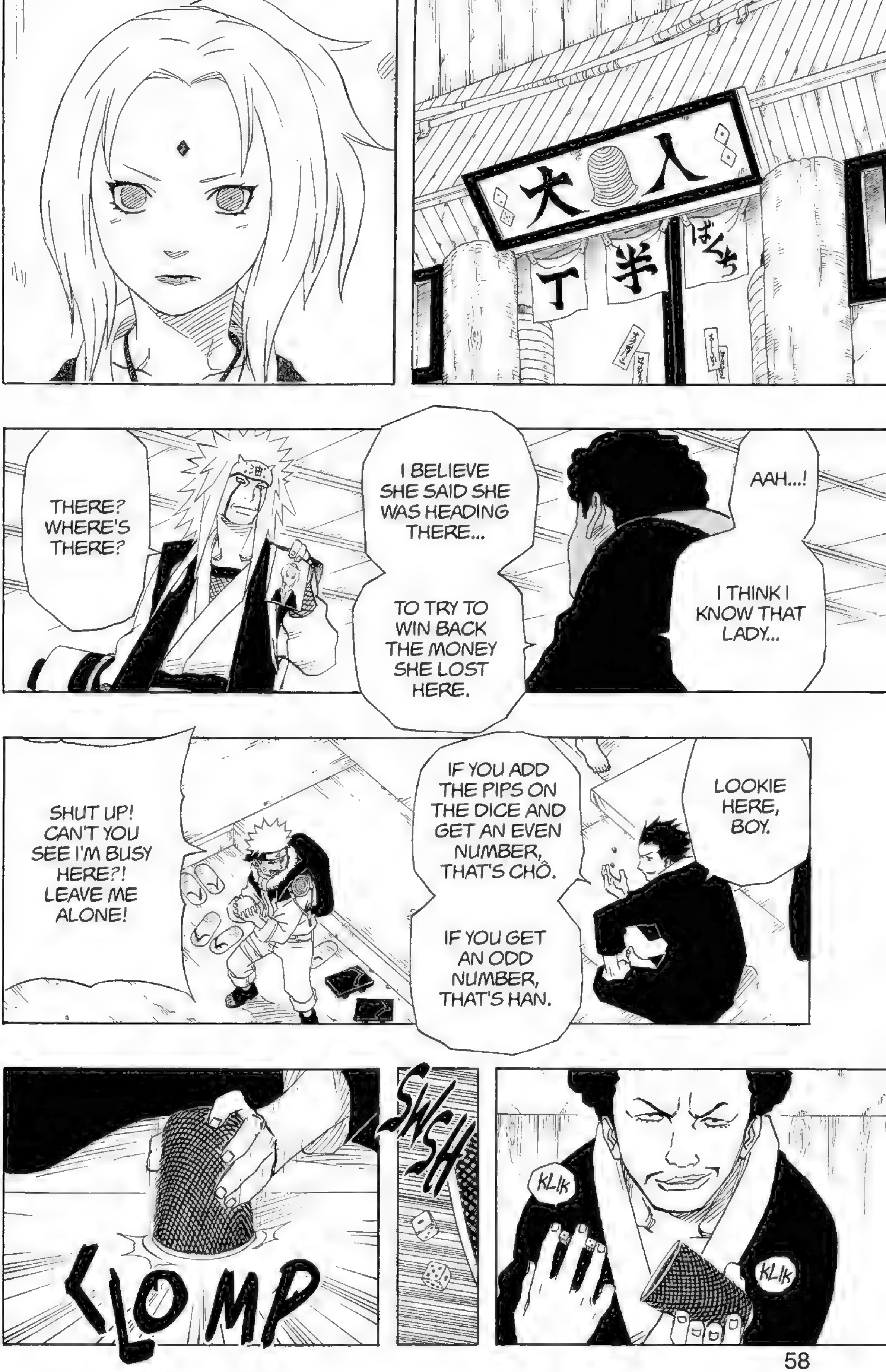
READ THIS WAY

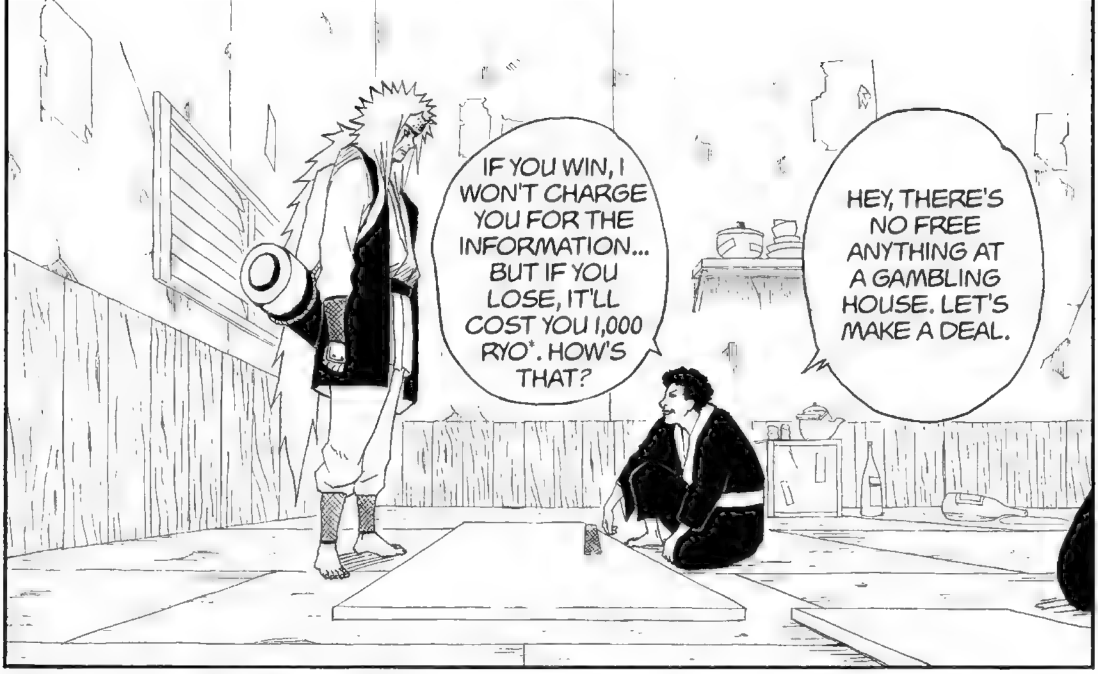

I THOUGHT I JUST TOLD YOU.
GET LOST!
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HEAL LORD OROCHIMARU'S ARMS.
WE'RE *NOT* ASKING YOU TO DO IT FOR FREE.
WON'T YOU CONSIDER... OUR OFFER?
I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A COUNT OF FIVE...
GET LOST BEFORE I FINISH!
OR ELSE I'LL ERASE YOU.
PLEASE CALM DOWN...
I REALLY DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE DISAPPOINTED BY THE TERMS...
5
4
SIGH...
3
2
...
1


...I CAN REANIMATE YOUR BELOVED LITTLE BROTHER *AND* YOUR LOVER BOTH...
I'VE LEARNED THE FORBIDDEN JUTSU...
...!
FLCK

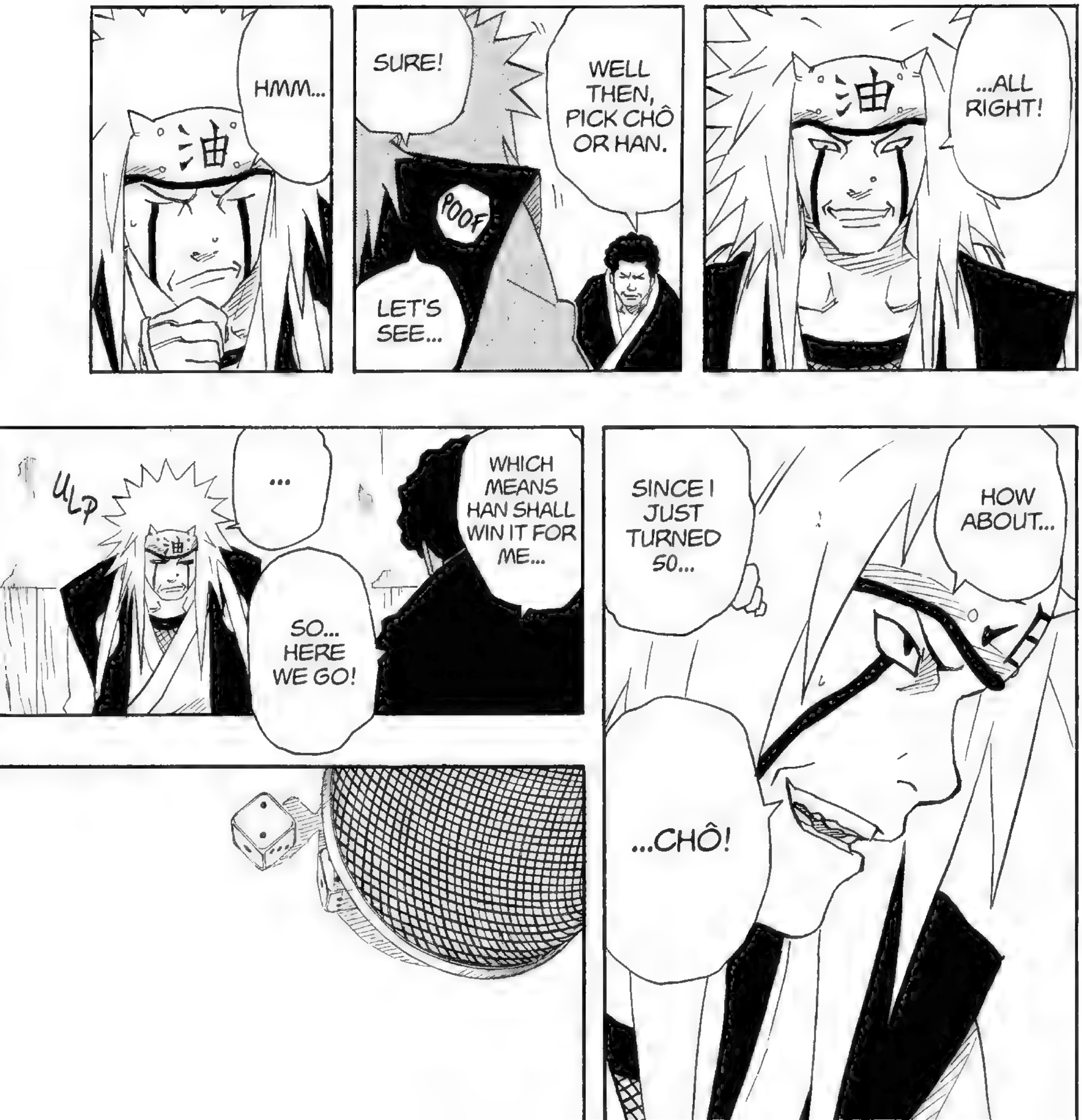
READ THIS WAY

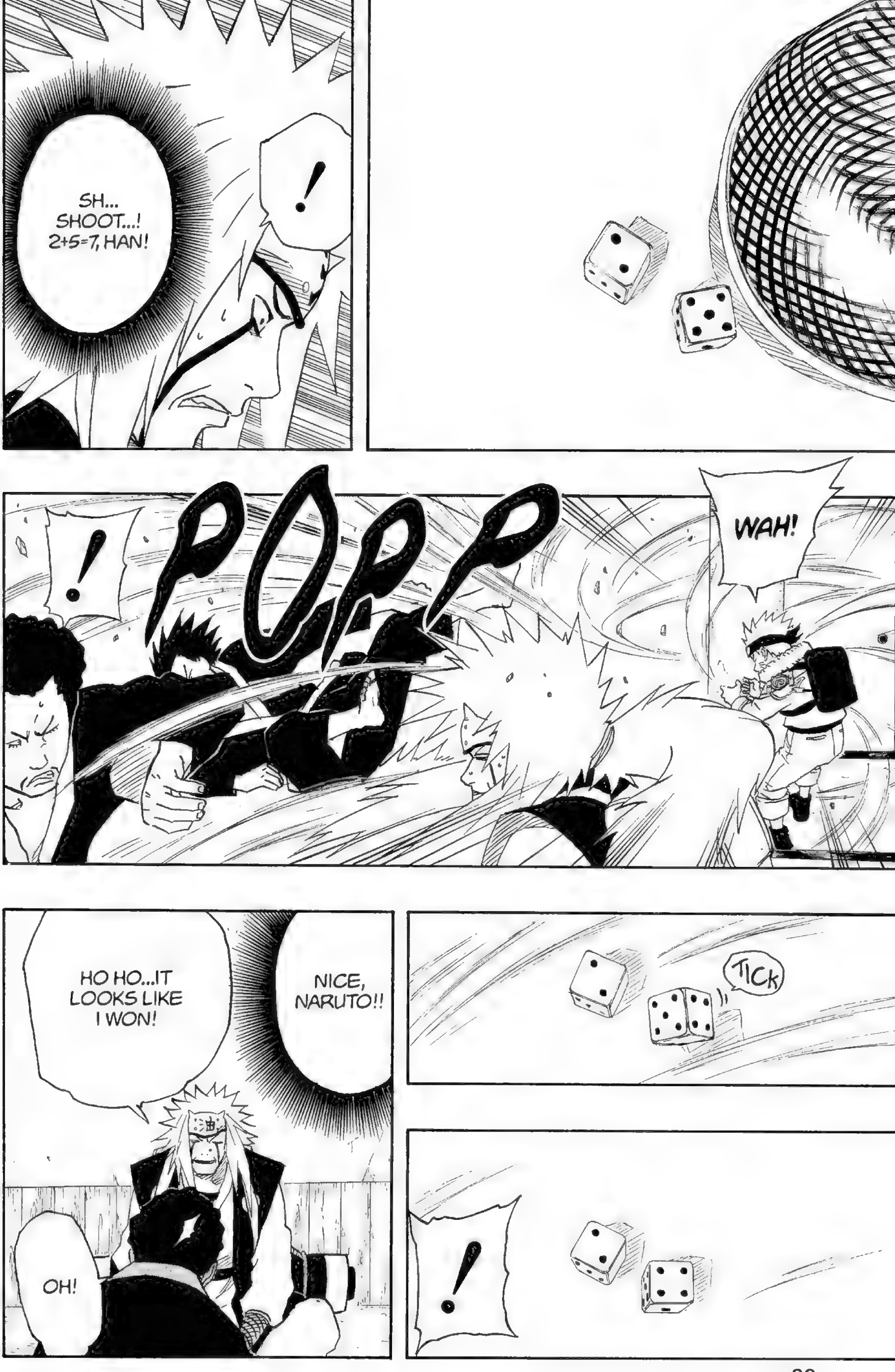

...!
SNORT?
...
DOES THE FACT THAT WE'RE STILL STANDING HERE WHOLE AND HALE...
...MEAN OUR OFFER IS ACCEPTABLE?
...


大人
半
丁
ばくち
AAH...!
I THINK I KNOW THAT LADY...
I BELIEVE SHE SAID SHE WAS HEADING THERE...
TO TRY TO WIN BACK THE MONEY SHE LOST HERE.
THERE? WHERE'S THERE?
LOOKIE HERE, BOY.
IF YOU ADD THE PIPS ON THE DICE AND GET AN EVEN NUMBER, THAT'S CHÔ.
IF YOU GET AN ODD NUMBER, THAT'S HAN.
SHUT UP! CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY HERE?! LEAVE ME ALONE!
KLIK
KLIK
SWSH
CLOMP

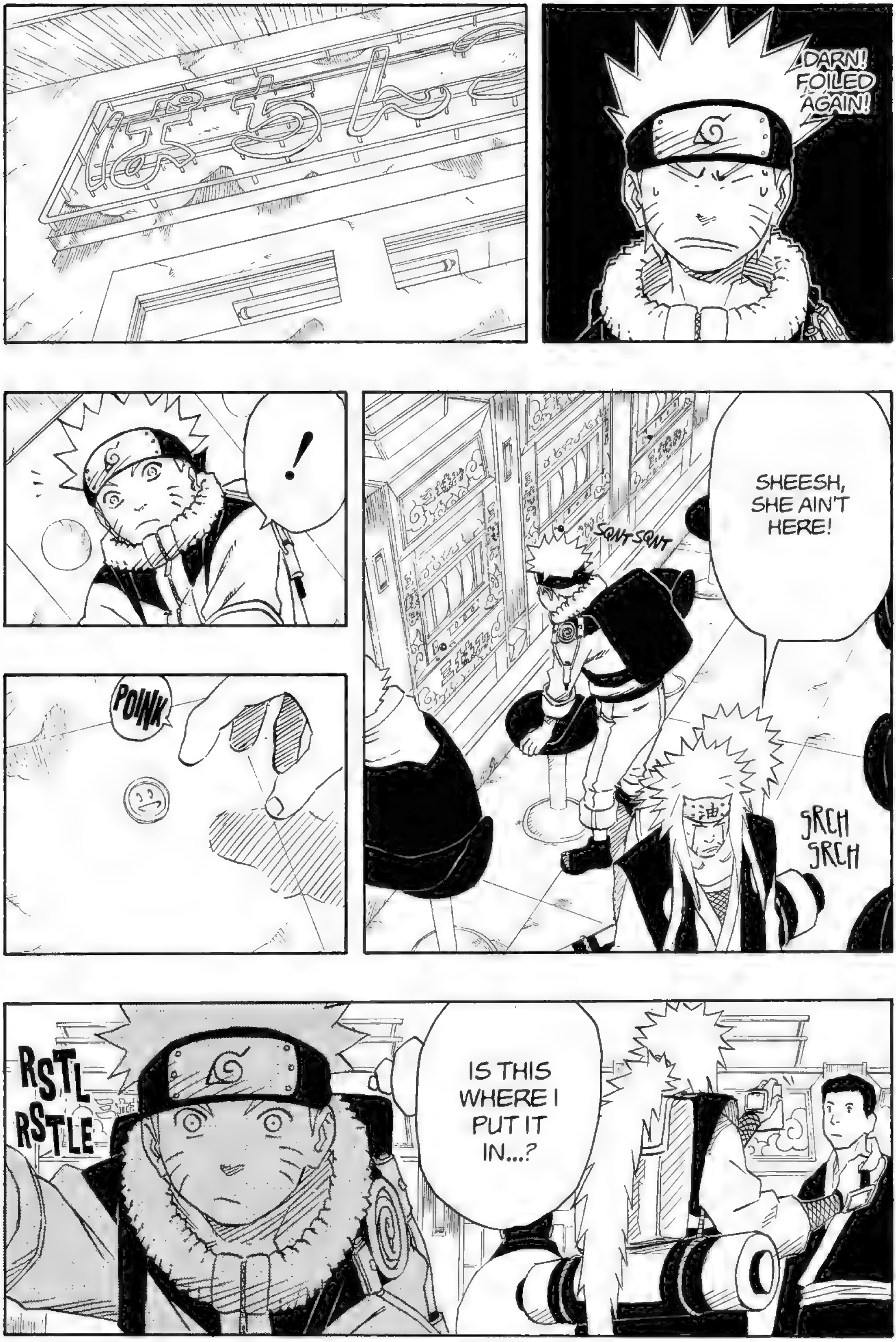

HEY, THERE'S NO FREE ANYTHING AT A GAMBLING HOUSE. LET'S MAKE A DEAL.
IF YOU WIN, I WON'T CHARGE YOU FOR THE INFORMATION... BUT IF YOU LOSE, IT'LL COST YOU 1,000 RYO*. HOW'S THAT?

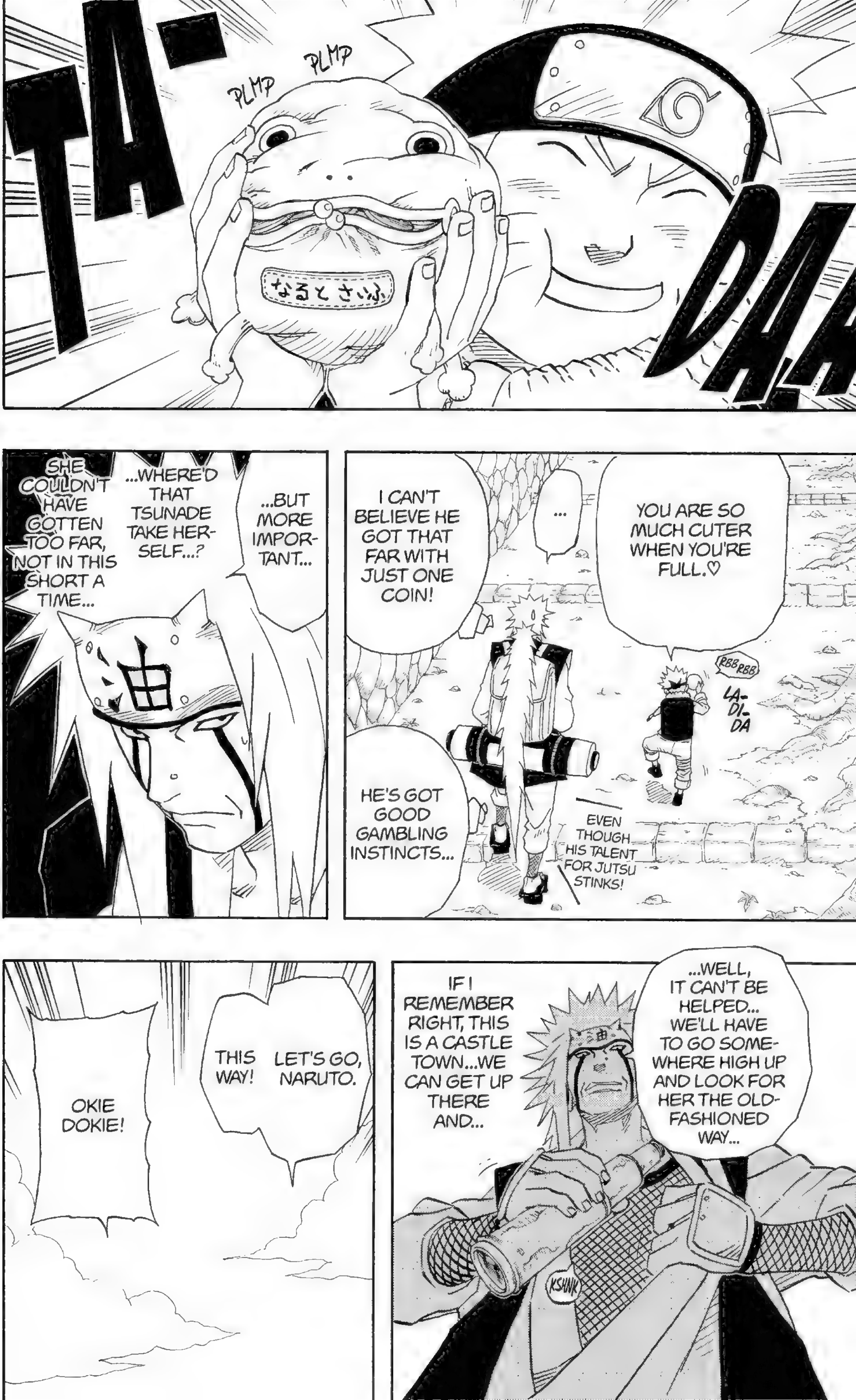
(*1,000 ryo is roughly 10,000 yen, or $100.)

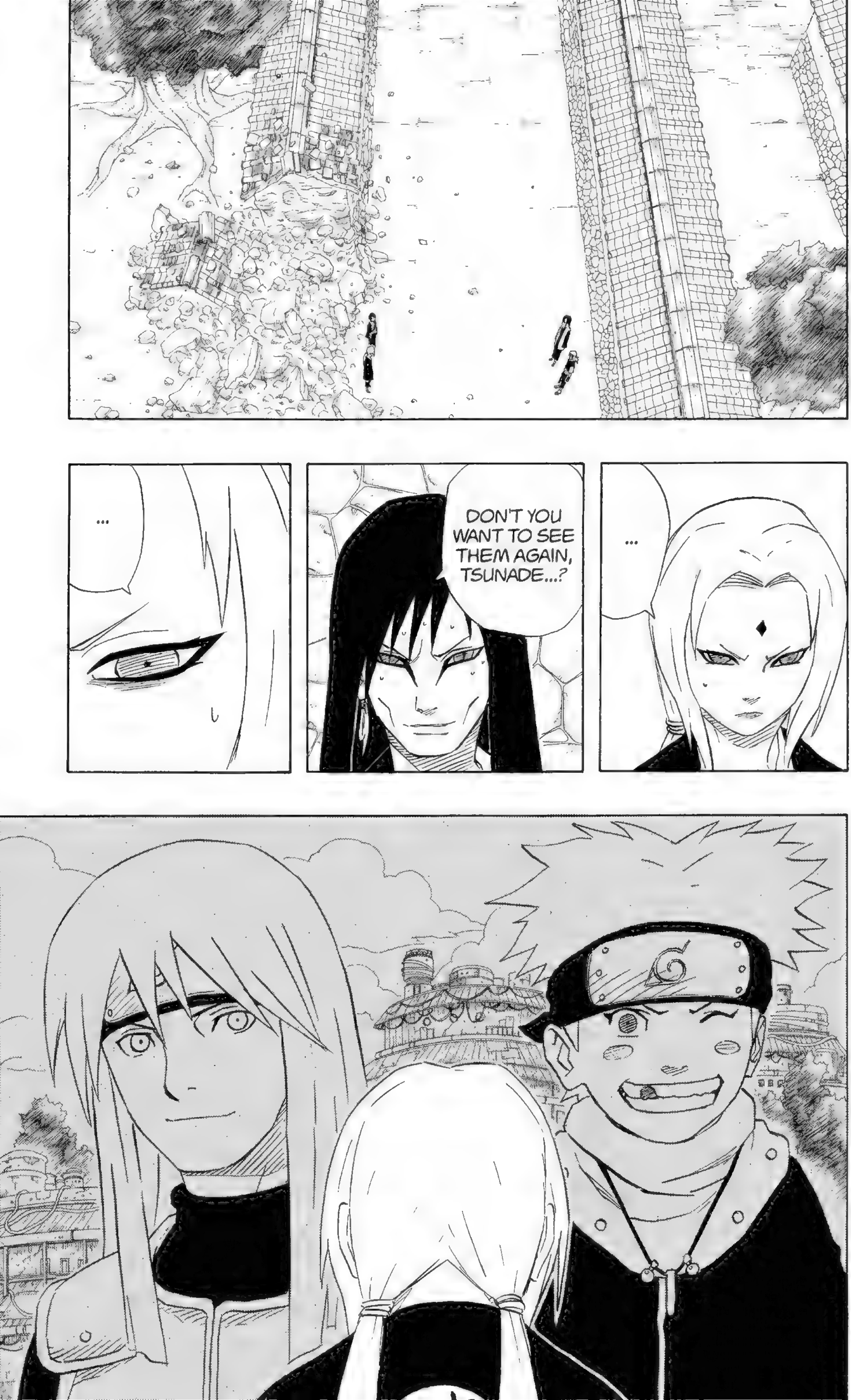

...ALL RIGHT!
WELL THEN, PICK CHÔ OR HAN.
SURE!
POOF
LET'S SEE...
HMM...
HOW ABOUT...
SINCE I JUST TURNED 50...
...CHÔ!
WHICH MEANS HAN SHALL WIN IT FOR ME...
...
ULP
SO... HERE WE GO!

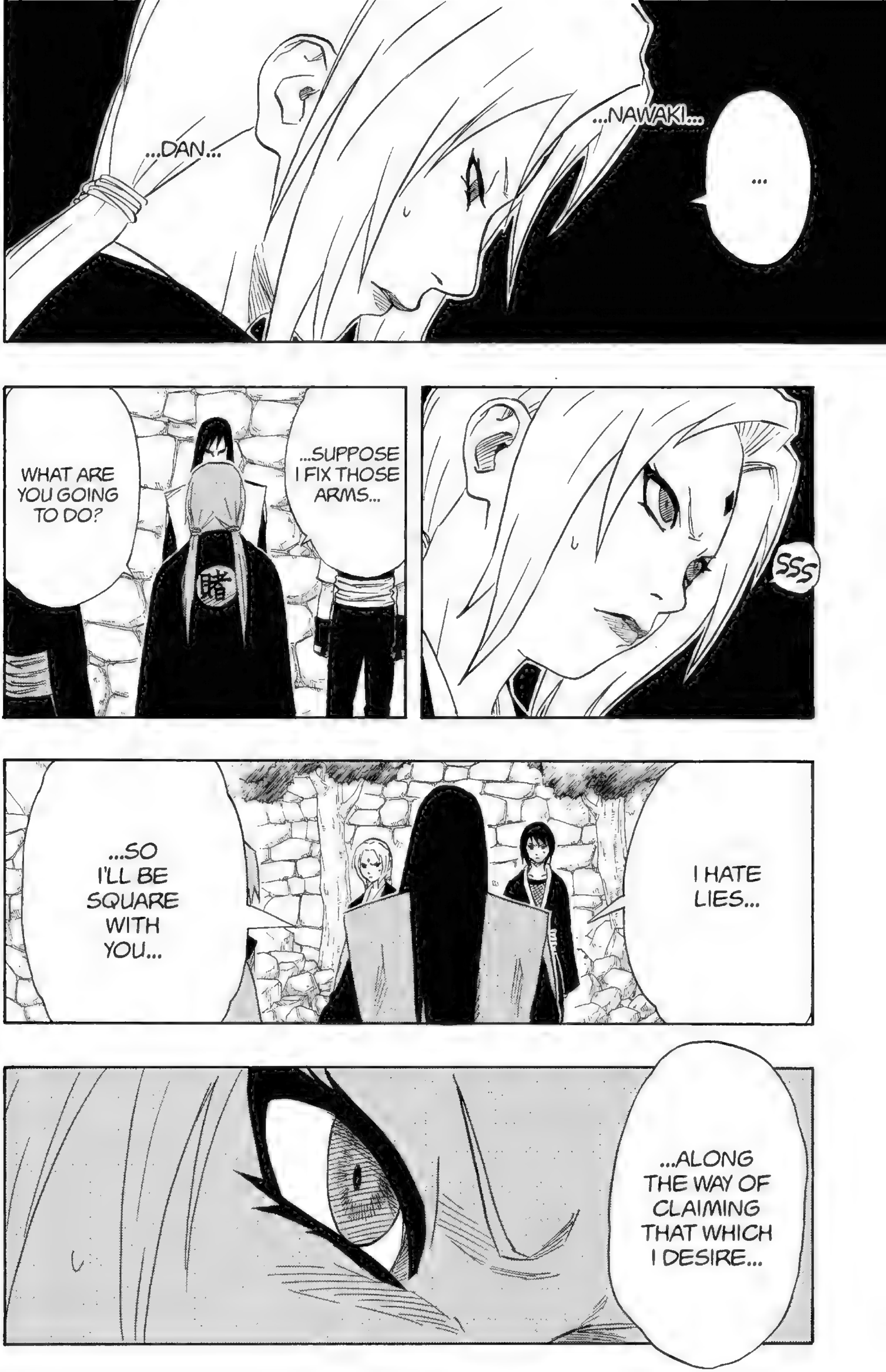

!
SH... SHOOT...! 2+5=7, HAN!
WAH!
POP
!
TICK
!
NICE, NARUTO!!
HO HO...IT LOOKS LIKE I WON!
OH!

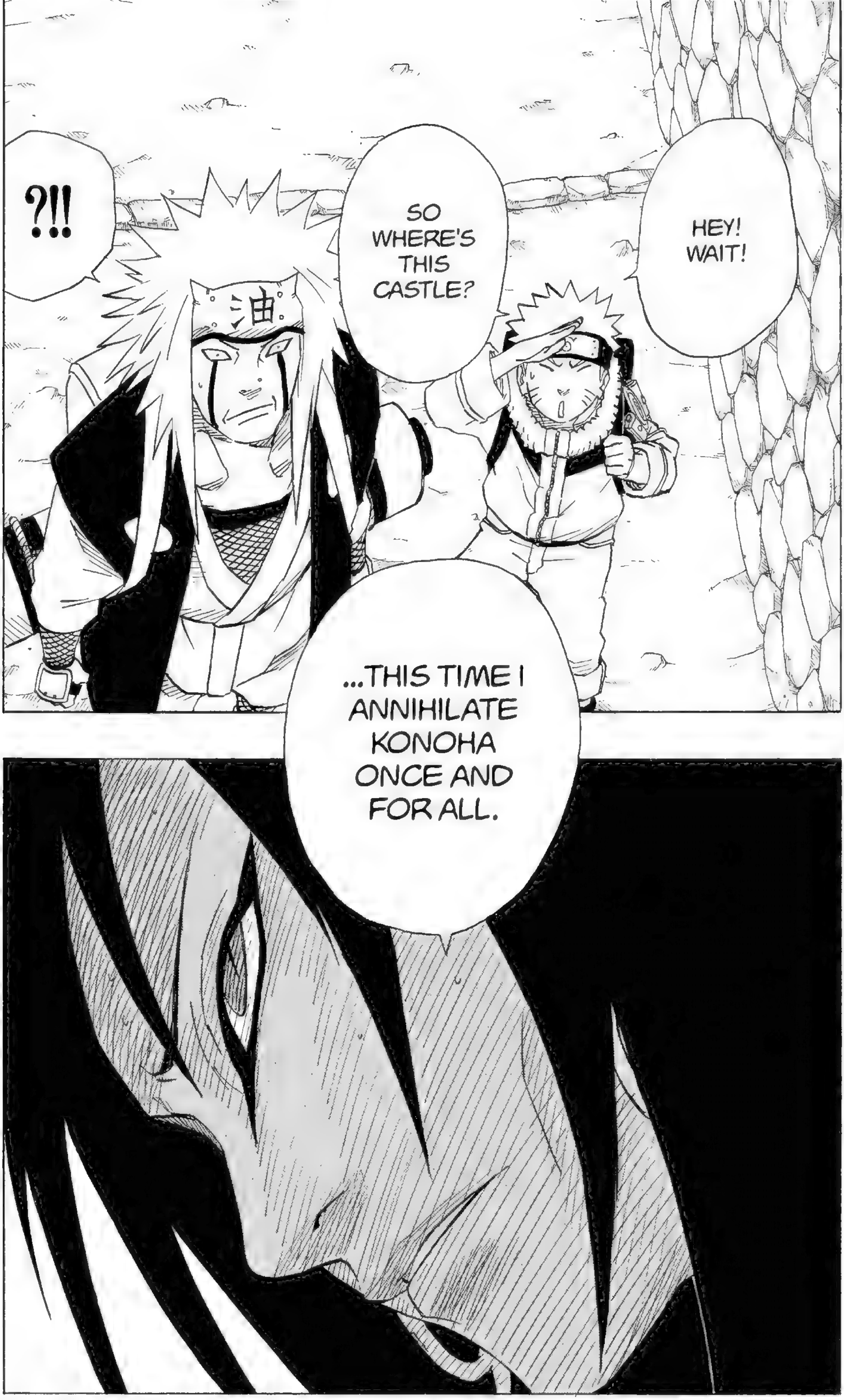
READ
THIS
WAY


DARN! FOILED AGAIN!
SHEESH, SHE AIN'T HERE!
SQNT-SQNT
SRCH SRCH
!
POINK
RSTL RSTLE
IS THIS WHERE I PUT IT IN...?


TA-
DA
PLMP
PLMP
なるとさいふ
YOU ARE SO MUCH CUTER WHEN YOU'RE FULL.♡
RBB RBB
LA-DI-DA
...
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE GOT THAT FAR WITH JUST ONE COIN!
HE'S GOT GOOD GAMBLING INSTINCTS...
EVEN THOUGH HIS TALENT FOR JUTSU STINKS!
...BUT MORE IMPORTANT...
...WHERE'D THAT TSUNADE TAKE HERSELF...?
SHE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN TOO FAR, NOT IN THIS SHORT A TIME...
...WELL, IT CAN'T BE HELPED... WE'LL HAVE TO GO SOMEWHERE HIGH UP AND LOOK FOR HER THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY...
IF I REMEMBER RIGHT, THIS IS A CASTLE TOWN...WE CAN GET UP THERE AND...
KSHNK
LET'S GO, NARUTO.
THIS WAY!
OKIE DOKIE!


...
DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE THEM AGAIN, TSUNADE...?
...


...NAWAKI...
...DAN...
...
SSS
...SUPPOSE I FIX THOSE ARMS...
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
賭
I HATE LIES...
...SO I'LL BE SQUARE WITH YOU...
...ALONG THE WAY OF CLAIMING THAT WHICH I DESIRE...


HEY! WAIT!
SO WHERE'S THIS CASTLE?
?!!
...THIS TIME I ANNIHILATE KONOHA ONCE AND FOR ALL.

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 27-B

I LIKE OIL PAINTING, DON'T GET ME WRONG, BUT WHAT I LEARNED IN COLLEGE WAS FINE ART, SO IT WAS PRETTY USELESS. I WAS TAUGHT THAT ONE SHOULD CREATE WHATEVER ONE FELT LIKE, EXPRESSING SOMETHING THAT WAS INSIDE ONESELF IN A WAY THAT IT COULD BE APPRECIATED BY THE VIEWER, AND YET IT SEEMED TO ME THAT MOST WORKS WERE SO ABSTRACT THAT THE VIEWER HAD TO RELY ON THE TITLE OR THE ACCOMPANYING BLURB, AND NOT ON THE PIECE ALONE. ONCE, MY INSTRUCTOR BROUGHT IN PHOTOS OF OILS HE HAD PAINTED HIMSELF, AND WAS BOASTING ABOUT HIS SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND HOW HE HAD SOLD HIS ART, BUT ALL I COULD THINK TO MYSELF WAS "IF YOU WANT YOUR STUFF TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED MORE, BE A BETTER ENTREPRENEUR!" IT WAS ALWAYS INSTRUCTORS LIKE HIM THAT WOULD RIDICULE MANGA, AND TRY TO IMPOSE A RANKING SYSTEM UPON THE ART WORLD. THEY WHO ELEVATED FINE ART AND DENIGRATED ENTERTAINMENT WERE THE ONES WHO WANTED TO SELL THEIR OWN WORK OR BE ACKNOWLEDGED THE MOST. I THINK IF THEY REALLY WANT TO CREATE FINE ART, THEY SHOULD AIM FOR SELF-SATISFACTION. BECAUSE WORKS THAT THEY PAINT HOPING TO RELAY AND EXPRESS THEIR EGO, NO MATTER IF THEY FIT WITHIN THE REALM OF FINE ART, ONCE THEY DECIDE THEY WANT TO MAKE A LIVING FROM SELLING SUCH WORKS, THEY'VE ALREADY MOVED IN THE DIRECTION OF ENTERTAINMENT.

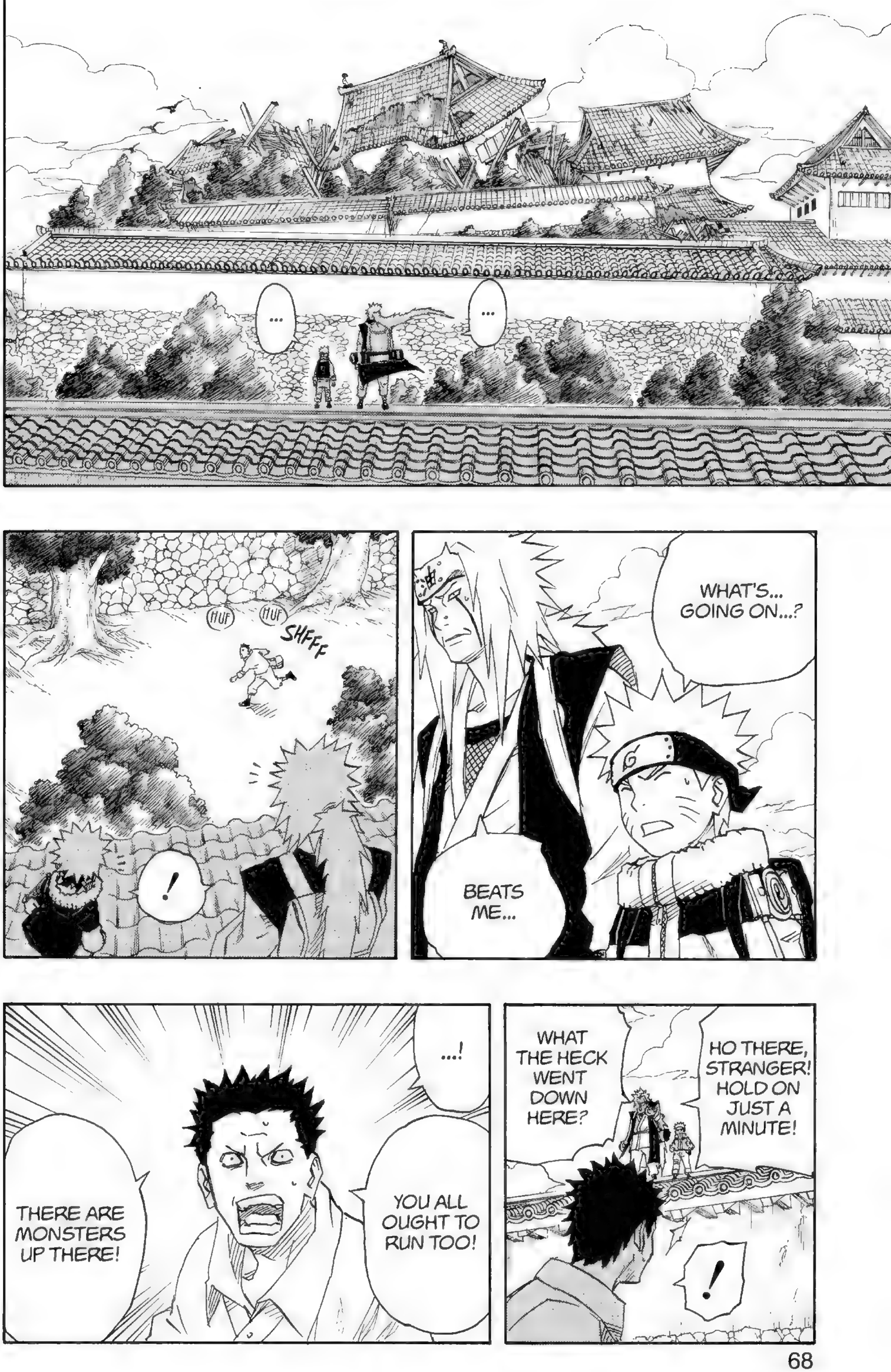
THE WORKS OF THOSE WHO WANT TO MAKE A LIVING AS PAINTERS BUT WHO CAN'T LIVE OFF OF THE SALE OF THEIR PAINTINGS SO RELUCTANTLY FIND EMPLOYMENT AS ART TEACHERS AND DENIGRATE MANGA (I.E. ENTERTAINMENT) ARE THE LOWEST FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT.

I THINK MANGA IS AN AMAZING MEDIUM BECAUSE NOT ONLY IS IT LOW-COST IN TERMS OF PRODUCTION, DEPENDING ONLY ON INK PRICES, BUT IT IS HIGH-QUALITY ENTERTAINMENT WHERE IT IS EASY TO CONVEY ONE'S SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH THE USE OF DIALOGUE, STORYBOARDING, AND CHARACTERS.

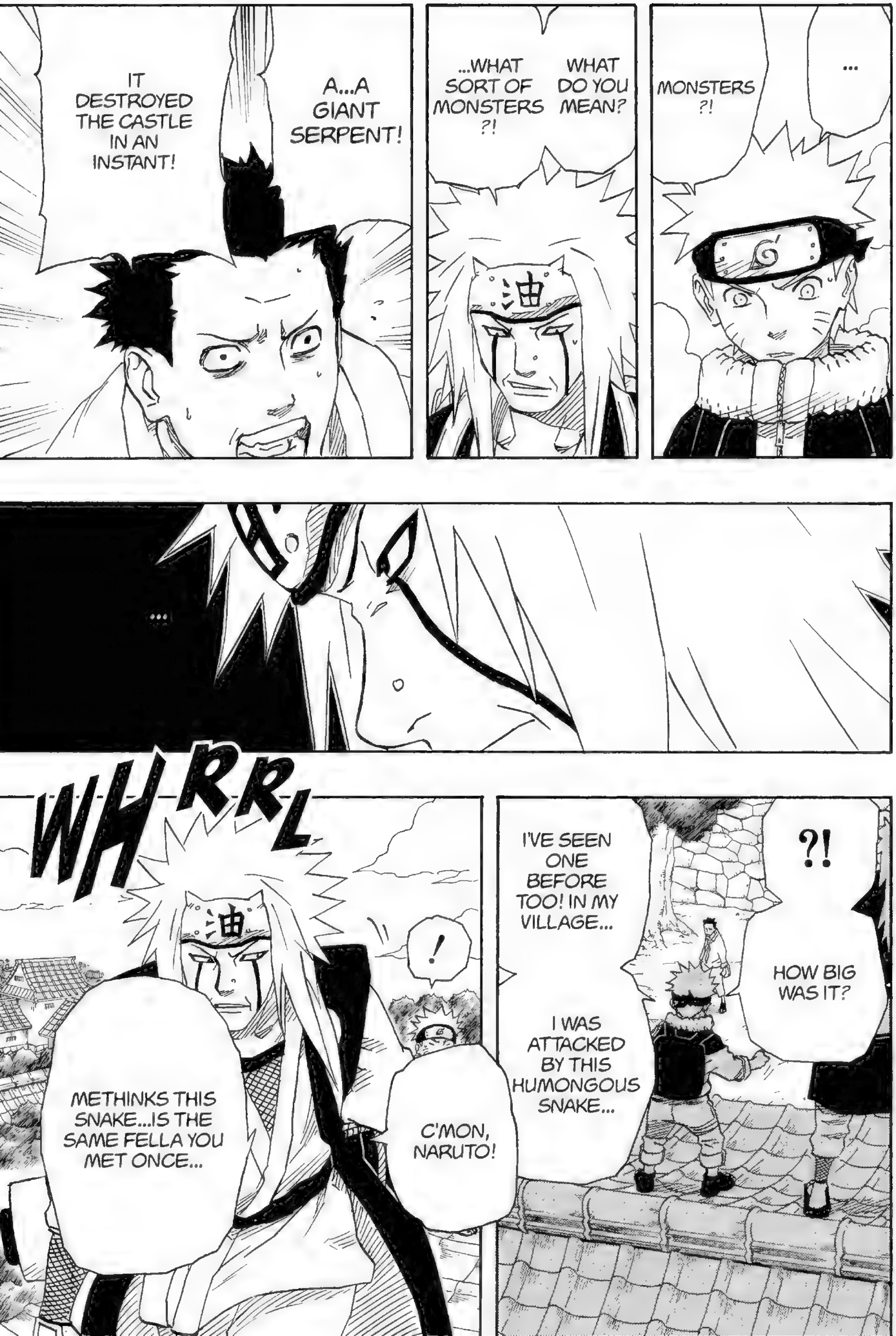
...I LOVE FINE ART, DON'T GET ME WRONG. AND I REALLY ADMIRE THOSE WHO PRODUCE FINE ART. IT'S JUST THAT I AM WARY OF THOSE ARTISTS WHO TRY TO JUDGE FINE ART AGAINST ENTERTAINMENT. IT IS THOSE ARTISTS WHO ARE NEITHER ARTISTS NOR ENTERTAINERS, BUT JUST PLAIN CRUD.♡

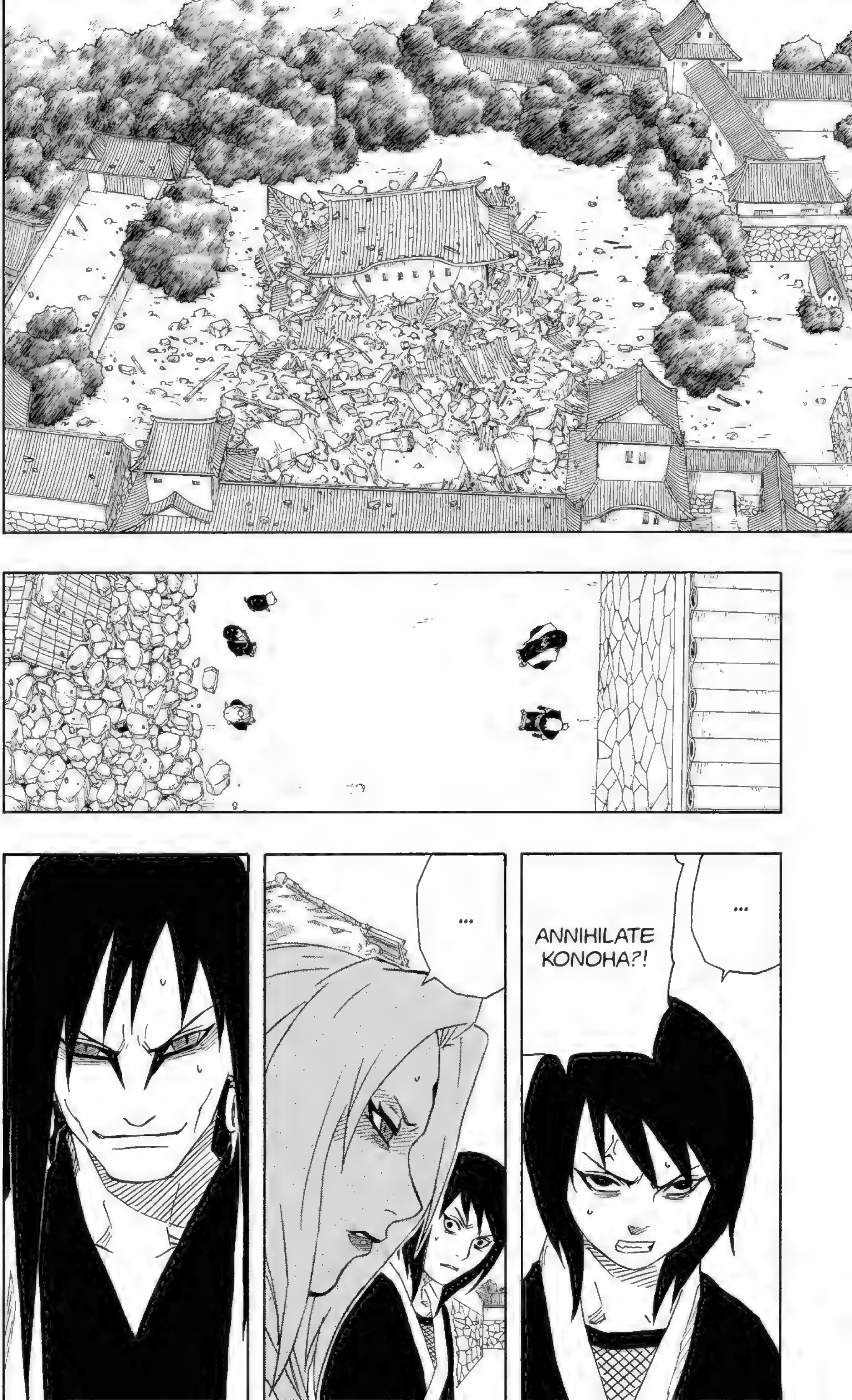
...HUH, I HADN'T REALLY INTENDED TO WRITE ABOUT THIS... BUT I GUESS OLD RAGE DIES HARD...A-HA-HA.

Number 157:
Tsunade's Answer...?!

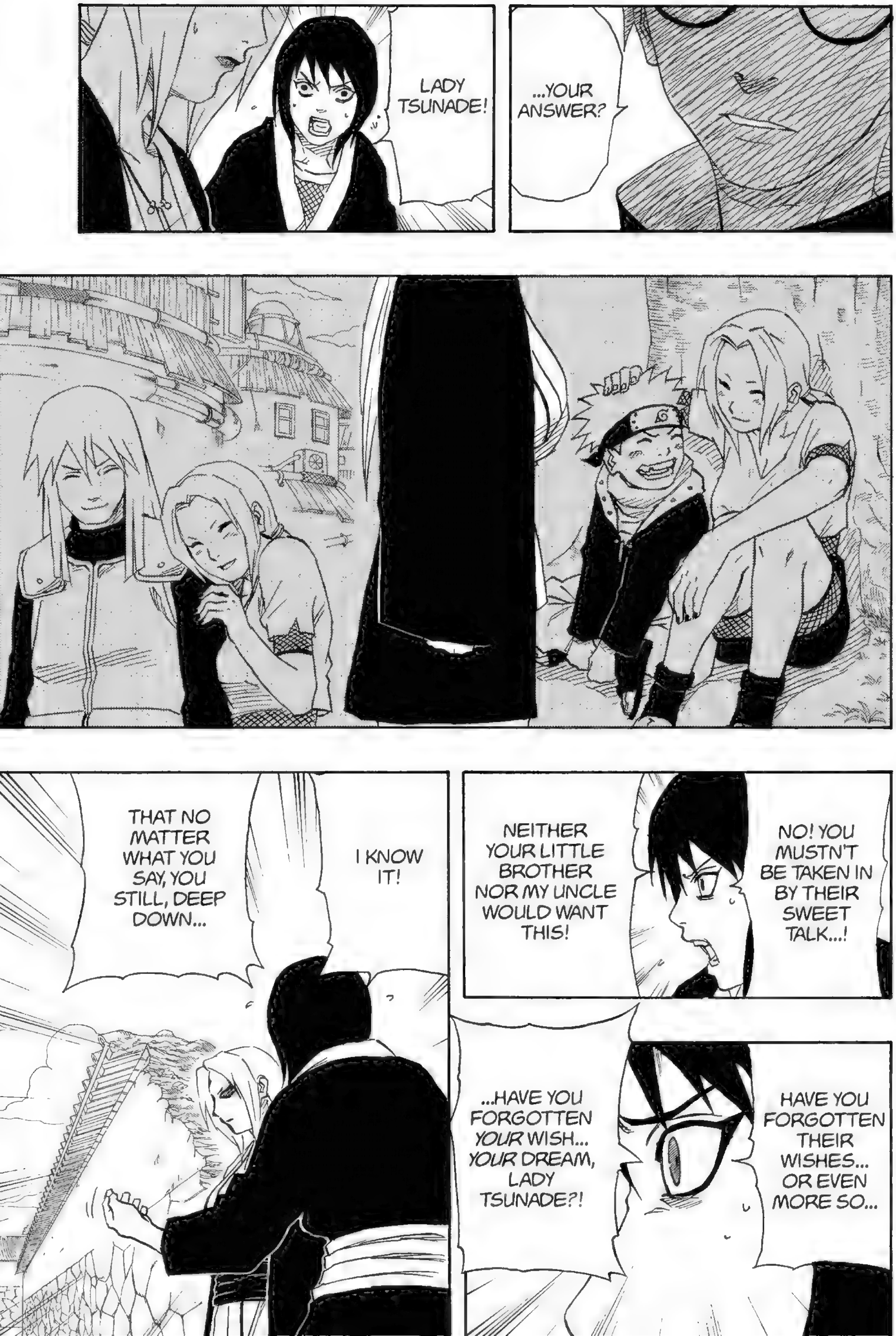

...
...
WHAT'S... GOING ON...?
BEATS ME...
HUF
HUF
SHFFF
!
HO THERE, STRANGER! HOLD ON JUST A MINUTE!
WHAT THE HECK WENT DOWN HERE?
!
...!
YOU ALL OUGHT TO RUN TOO!
THERE ARE MONSTERS UP THERE!

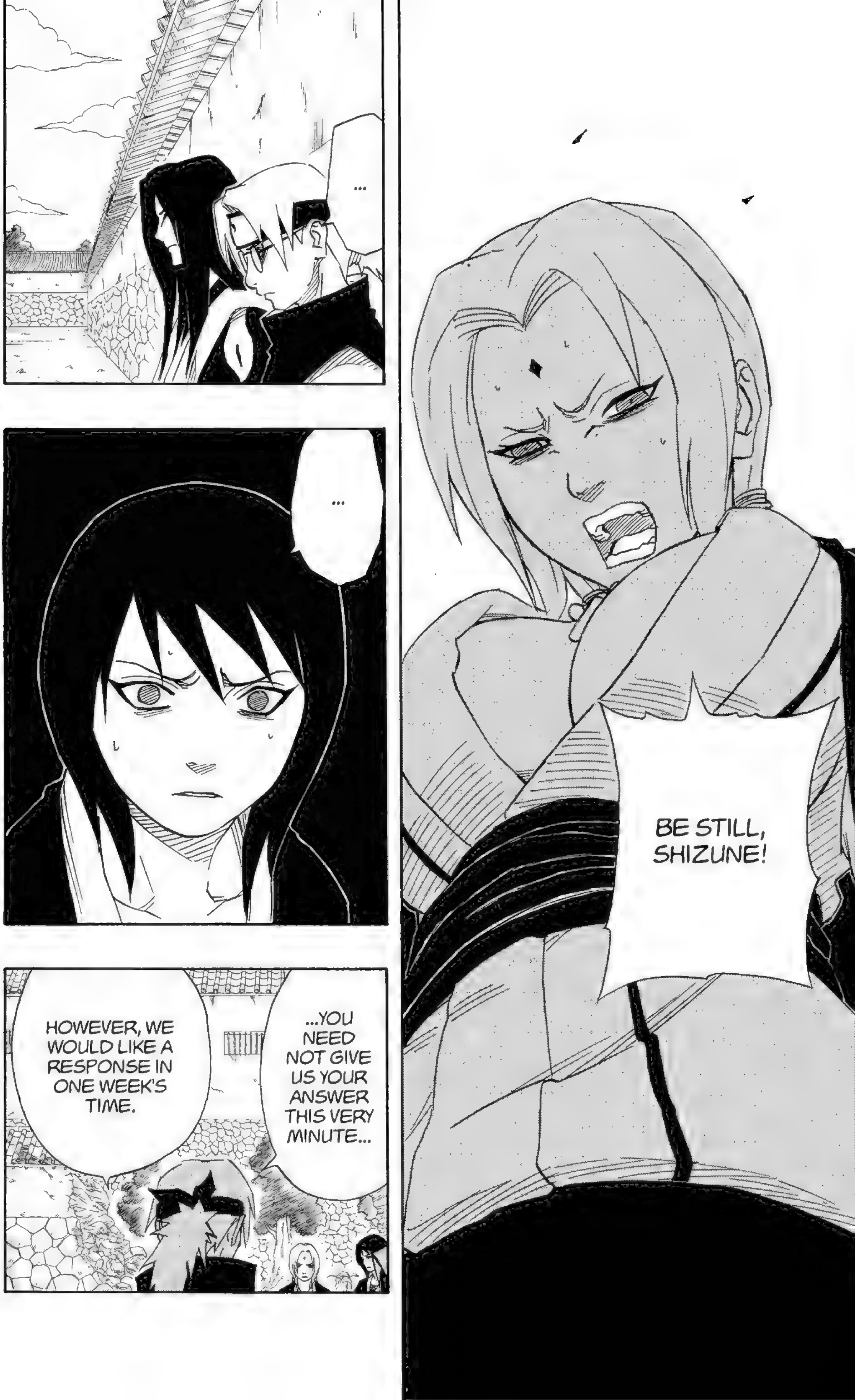
READ THIS WAY

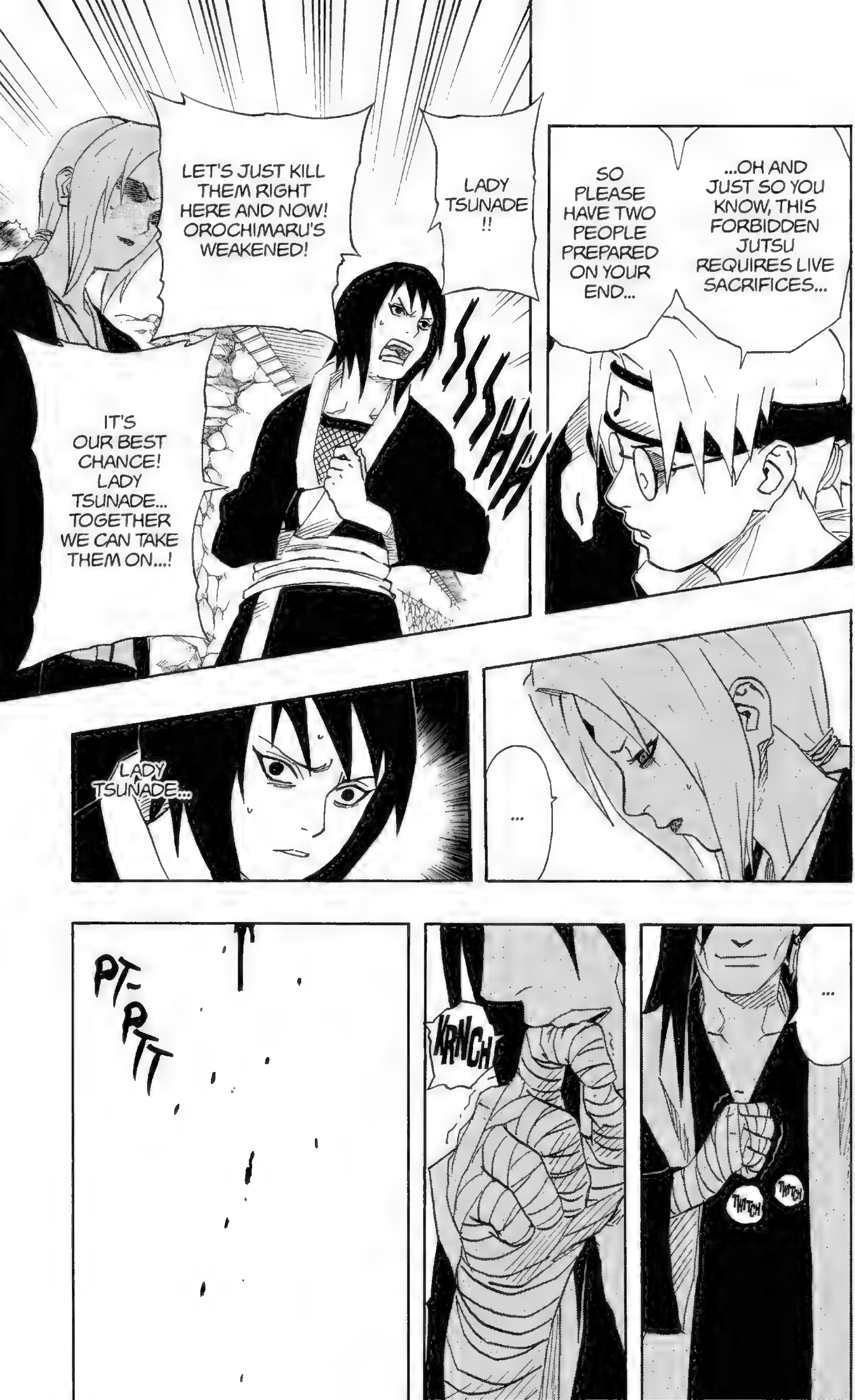

...
MONSTERS ?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
...WHAT SORT OF MONSTERS ?!
A...A GIANT SERPENT!
IT DESTROYED THE CASTLE IN AN INSTANT!
...
?!
HOW BIG WAS IT?
I'VE SEEN ONE BEFORE TOO! IN MY VILLAGE...
I WAS ATTACKED BY THIS HUMONGOUS SNAKE...
WHRRL
!
C'MON, NARUTO!
METHINKS THIS SNAKE...IS THE SAME FELLA YOU MET ONCE...

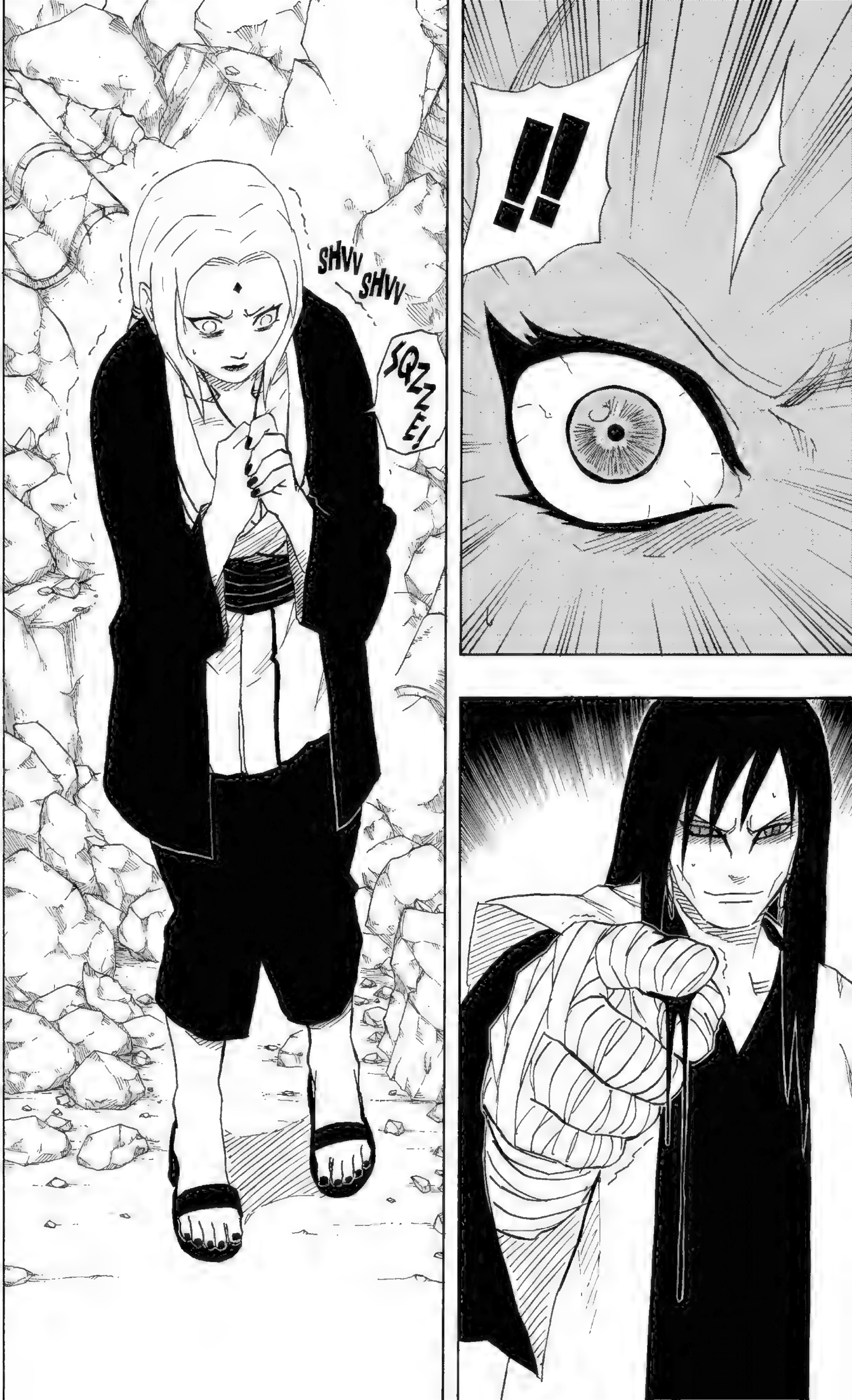

...
ANNIHILATE KONOHA?!
...

READ THIS WAY

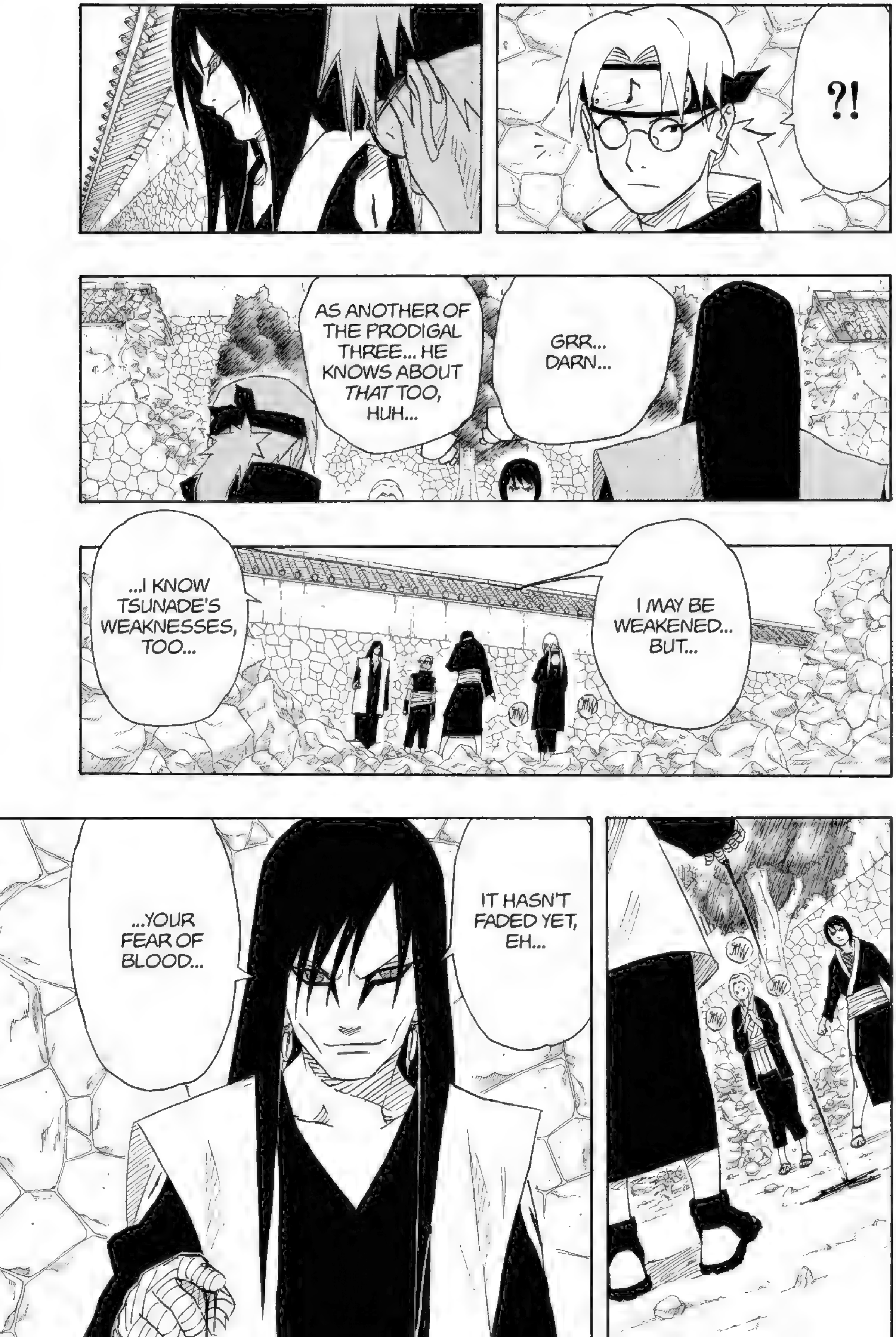

...YOUR ANSWER?
LADY TSUNADE!
NO! YOU MUSTN'T BE TAKEN IN BY THEIR SWEET TALK...!
NEITHER YOUR LITTLE BROTHER NOR MY UNCLE WOULD WANT THIS!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THEIR WISHES... OR EVEN MORE SO...
...HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN *YOUR* WISH... *YOUR* DREAM, LADY TSUNADE?!
I KNOW IT!
THAT NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, YOU STILL, DEEP DOWN...

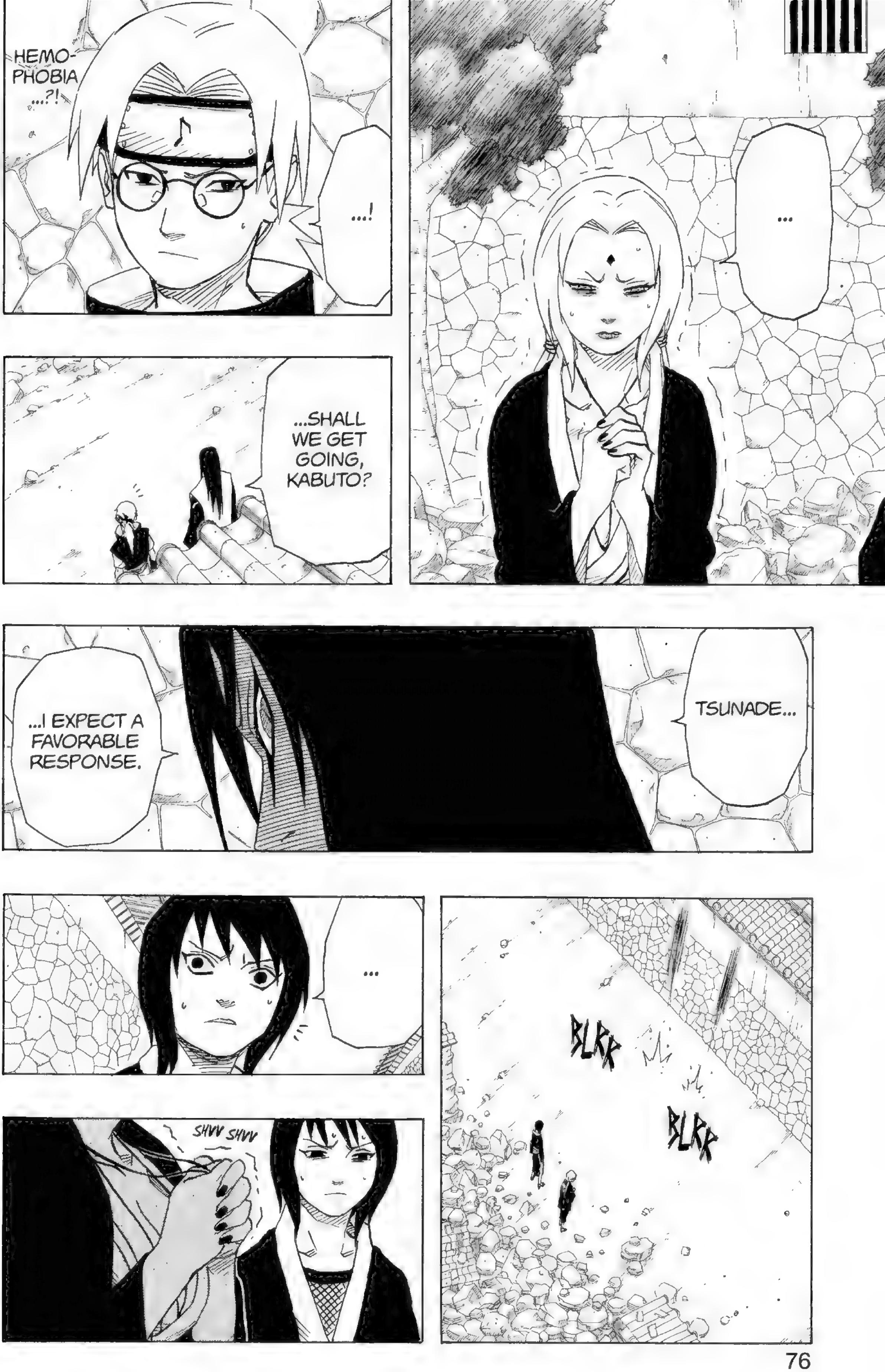

BE STILL, SHIZUNE!
...
...
...YOU NEED NOT GIVE US YOUR ANSWER THIS VERY MINUTE...
HOWEVER, WE WOULD LIKE A RESPONSE IN ONE WEEK'S TIME.

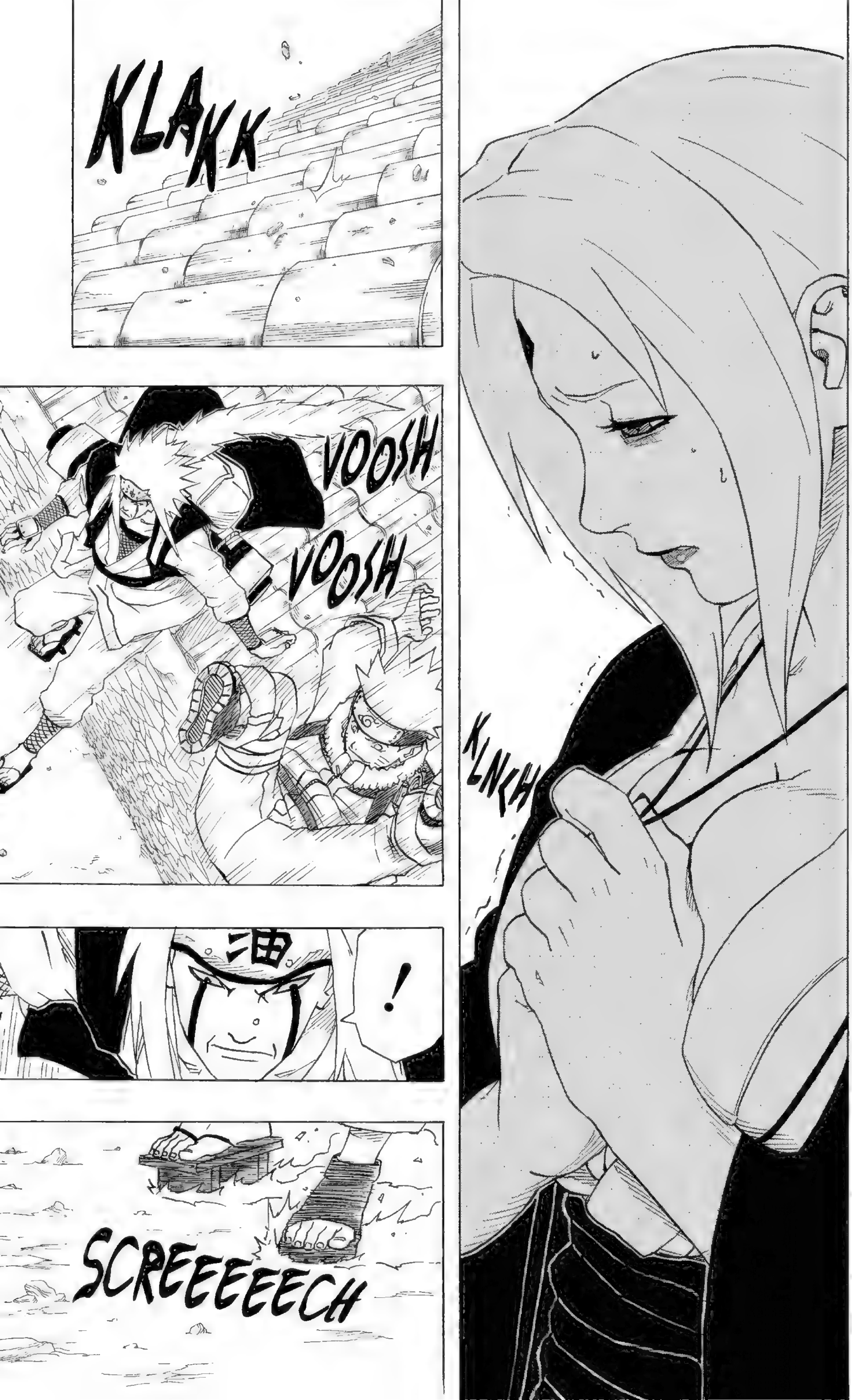

...OH AND JUST SO YOU KNOW, THIS FORBIDDEN JUTSU REQUIRES LIVE SACRIFICES...
SO PLEASE HAVE TWO PEOPLE PREPARED ON YOUR END...
SSHHH
LADY TSUNADE!!
LET'S JUST KILL THEM RIGHT HERE AND NOW! OROCHIMARU'S WEAKENED!
IT'S OUR BEST CHANCE! LADY TSUNADE... TOGETHER WE CAN TAKE THEM ON...!
...
LADY TSUNADE...
...
TWITCH
TWITCH
KRNCH
PT-P-TT

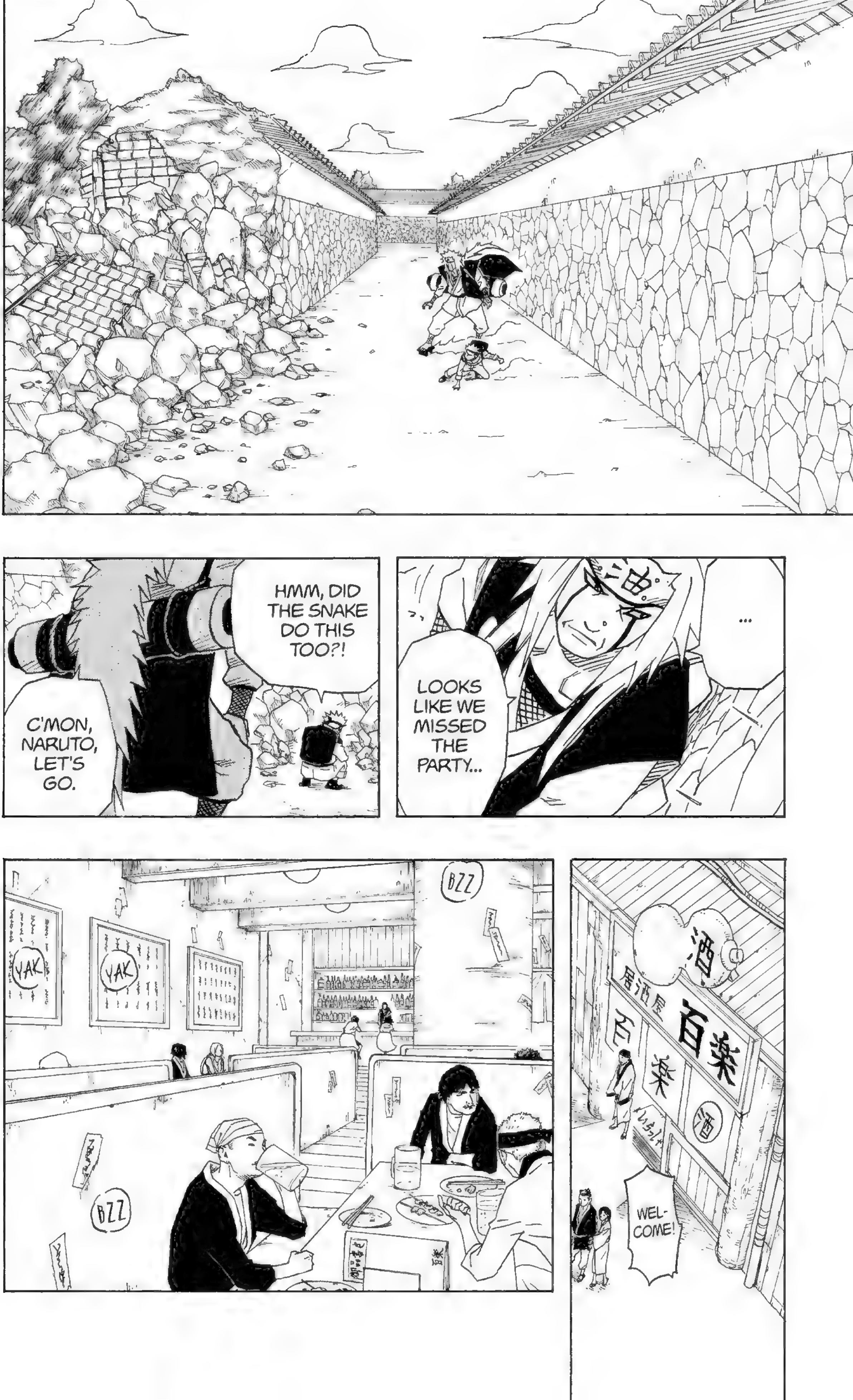

!!
SHVV SHVV
SQZZZE!

READ THIS WAY

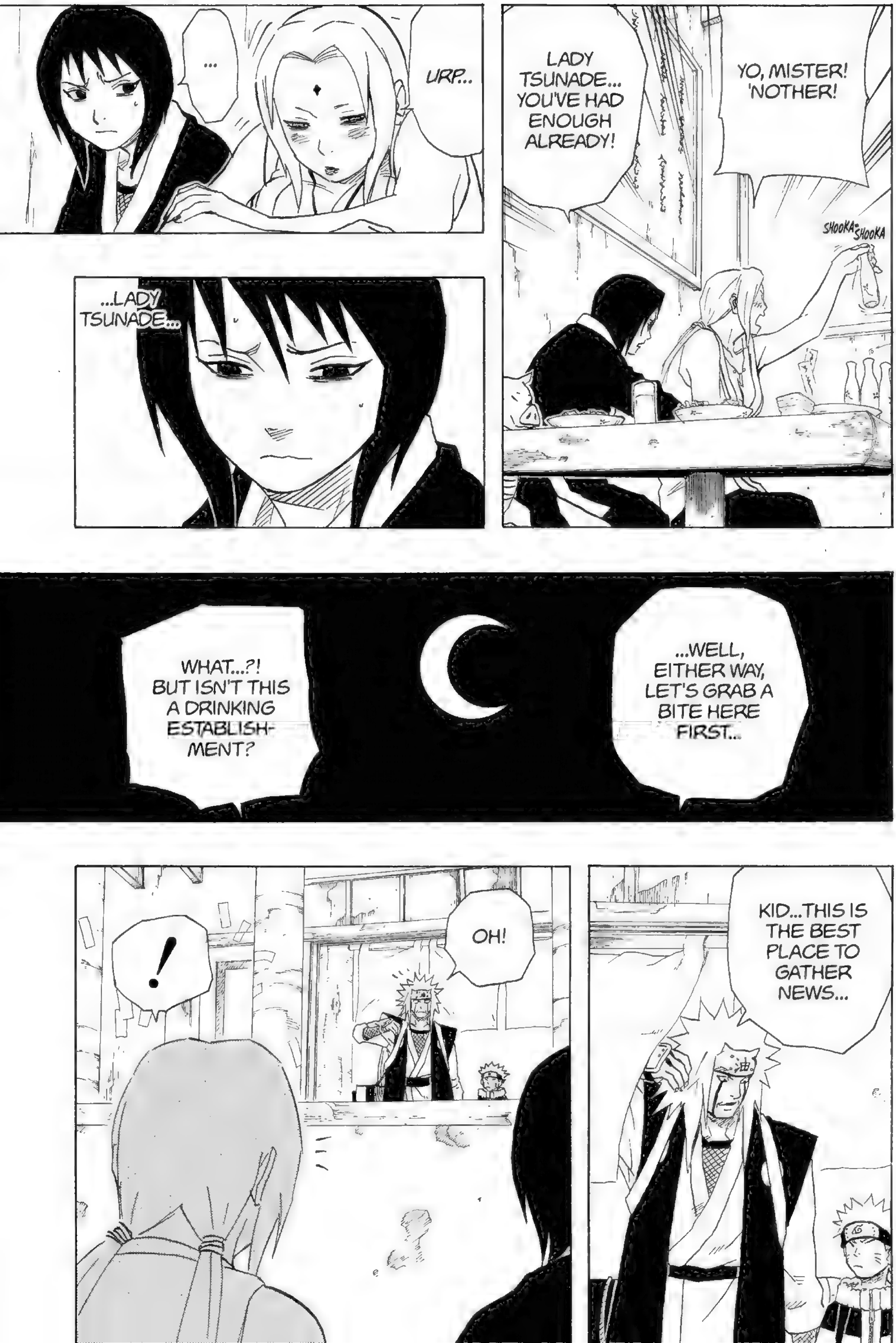

?!
GRR... DARN...
AS ANOTHER OF THE PRODIGAL THREE... HE KNOWS ABOUT *THAT* TOO, HUH...
I MAY BE WEAKENED... BUT...
...I KNOW TSUNADE'S WEAKNESSES, TOO...
IT HASN'T FADED YET, EH...
...YOUR FEAR OF BLOOD...

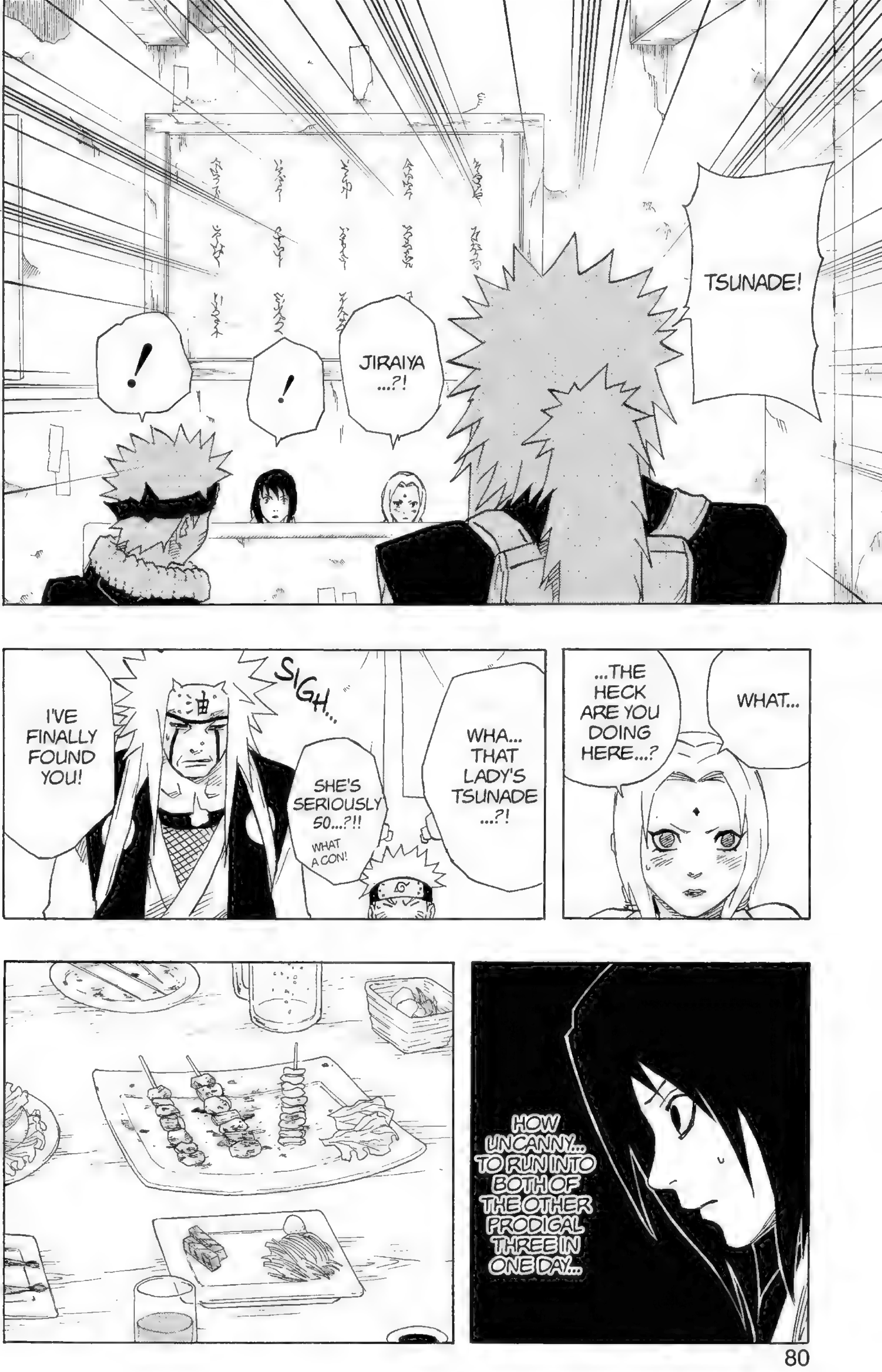

...
HEMOPHOBIA ...?!
...!
...SHALL WE GET GOING, KABUTO?
TSUNADE...
...I EXPECT A FAVORABLE RESPONSE.
BLRK
BLRK
...
SHVV SHVV


KLNCH
KLAKK
VOOSH
VOOSH
油
!
SCREEEEEECH

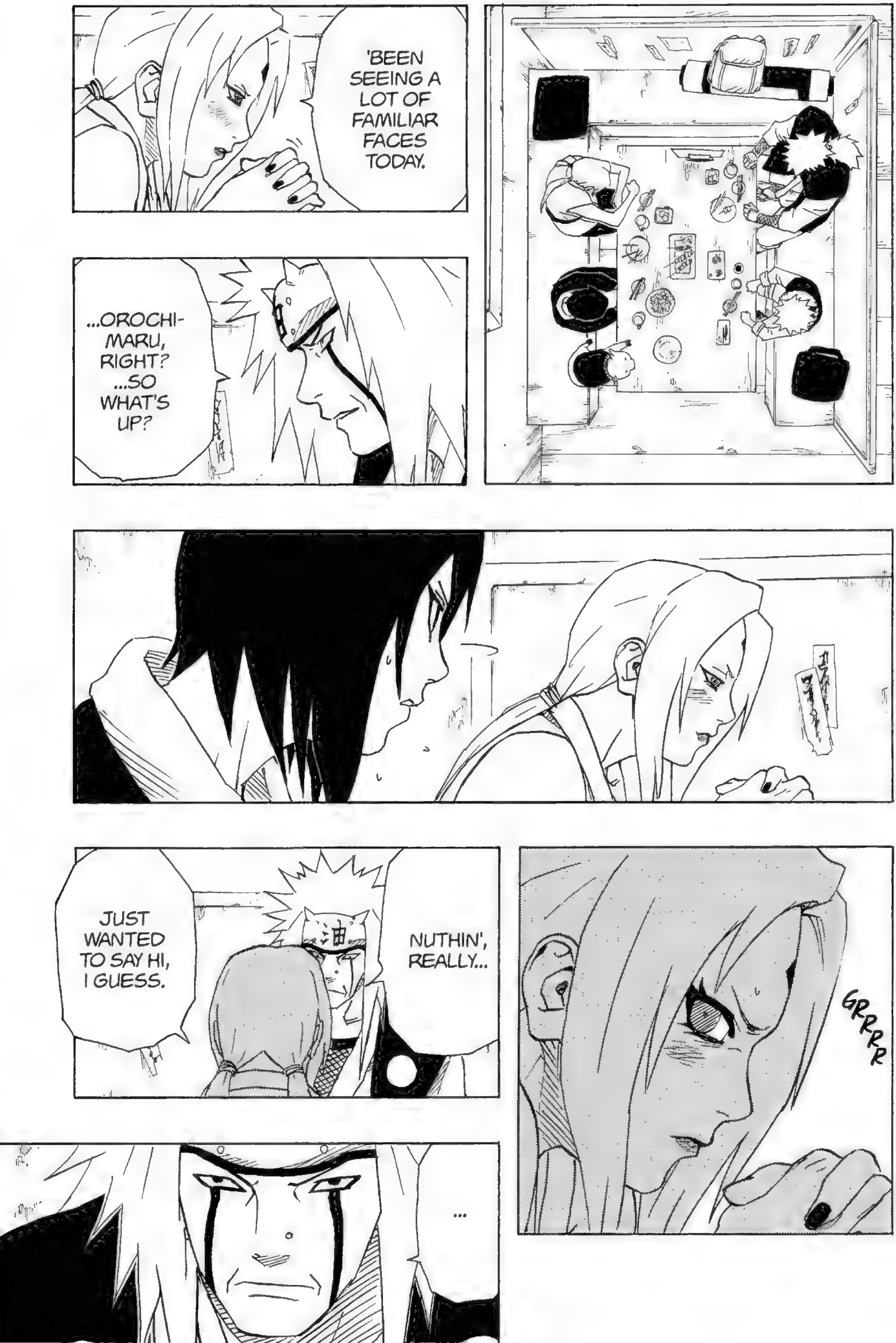

...
LOOKS LIKE WE MISSED THE PARTY...
HMM, DID THE SNAKE DO THIS TOO?!
C'MON, NARUTO, LET'S GO.
酒
居酒屋 百楽
百楽
酒
WEL-COME!
BZZ
YAK
YAK
BZZ

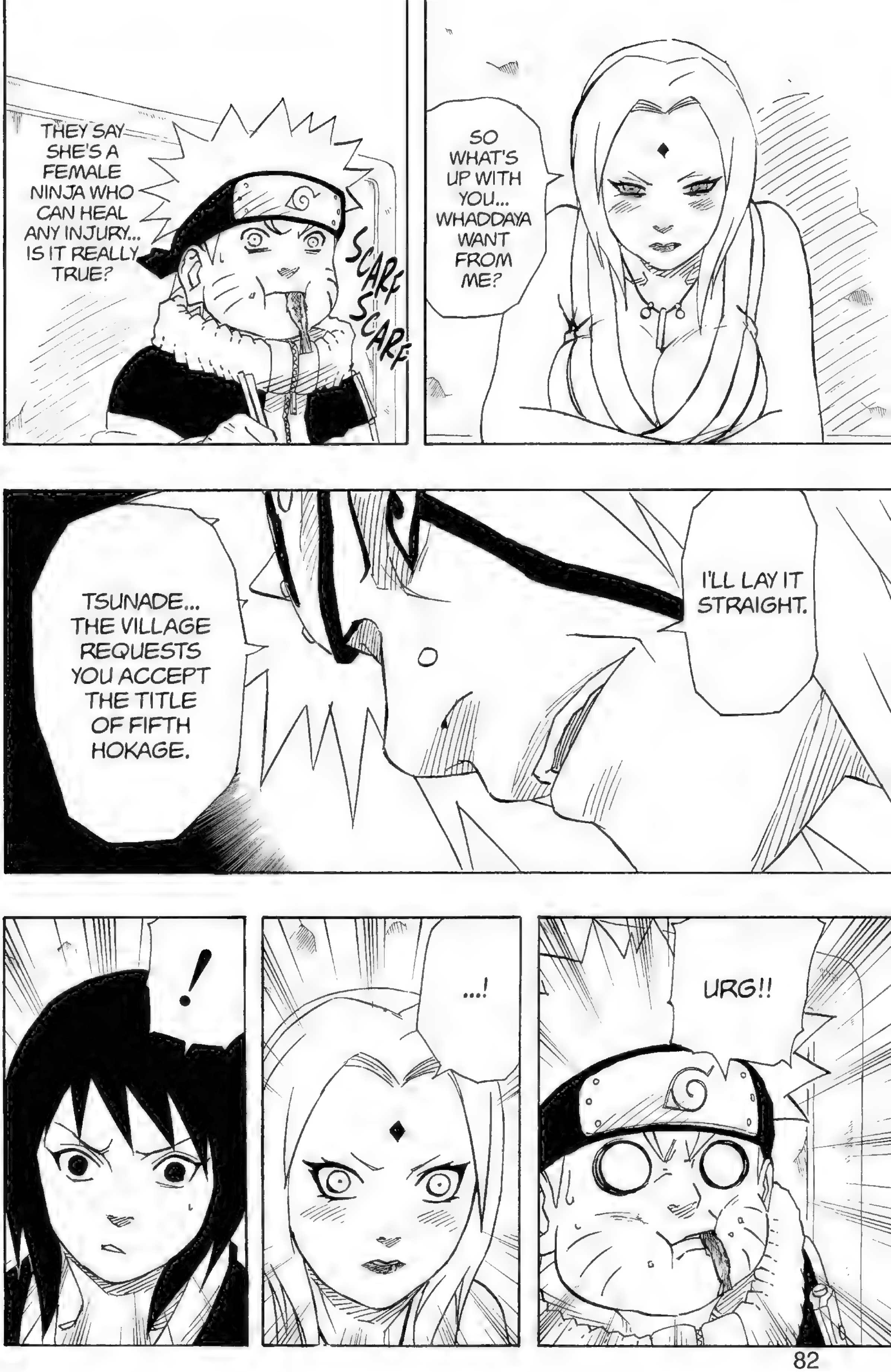
READ THIS WAY


YO, MISTER! 'NOTHER!
LADY TSUNADE... YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH ALREADY!
SHOOKA-SHOOKA
URP...
...
...LADY TSUNADE...
...WELL, EITHER WAY, LET'S GRAB A BITE HERE FIRST...
WHAT...?! BUT ISN'T THIS A DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT?
KID...THIS IS THE BEST PLACE TO GATHER NEWS...
OH!
!

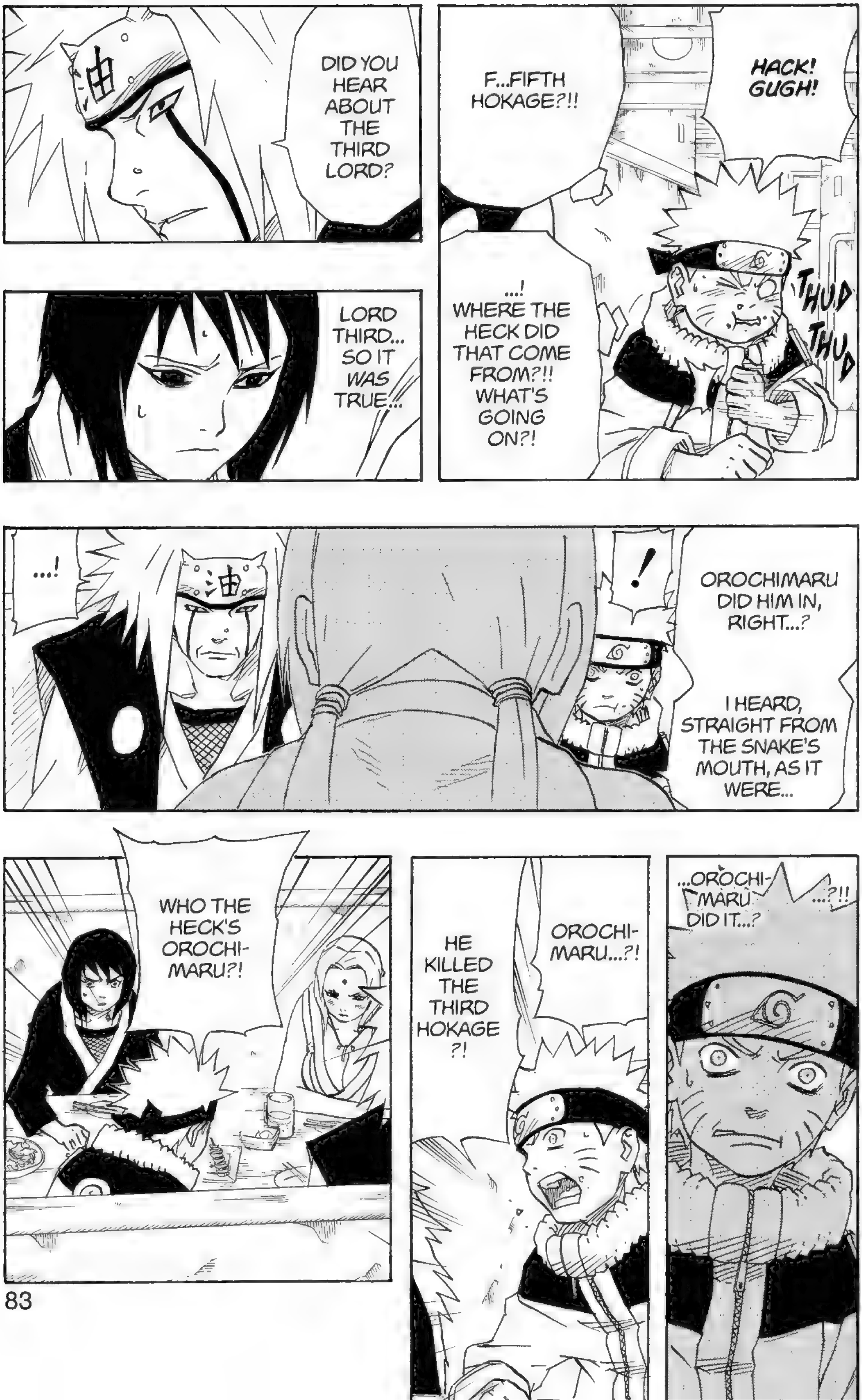

TSUNADE!
JIRAIYA ...?!
!
!
WHAT...
...THE HECK ARE YOU DOING HERE...?
WHA... THAT LADY'S TSUNADE ...?!
SHE'S SERIOUSLY 50...?!!
WHAT A CON!
SIGH...
I'VE FINALLY FOUND YOU!
HOW UNCANNY... TO RUN INTO BOTH OF THE OTHER PRODIGAL THREE IN ONE DAY...

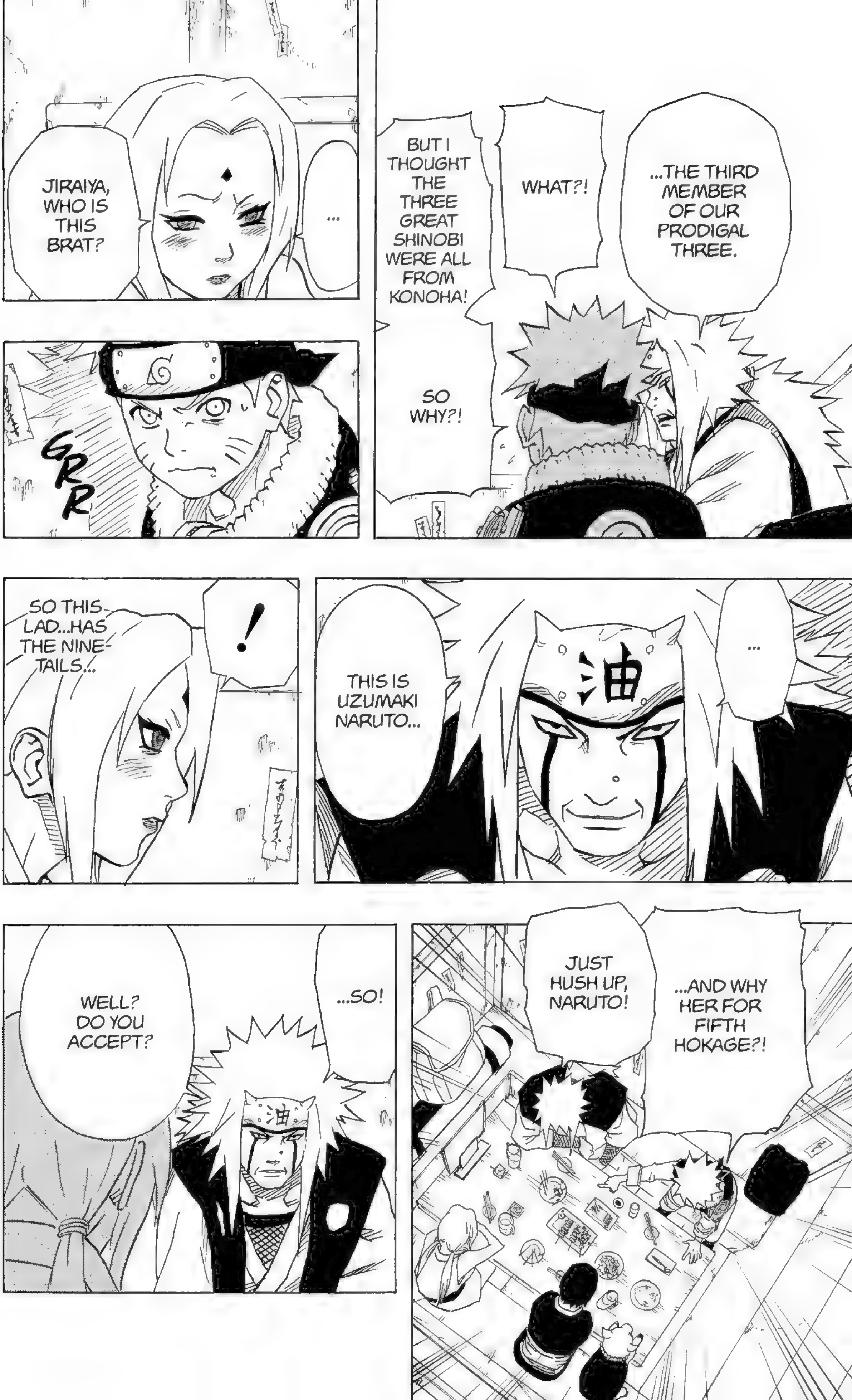
READ THIS WAY


'BEEN SEEING A LOT OF FAMILIAR FACES TODAY.
...OROCHIMARU, RIGHT? ...SO WHAT'S UP?
NUTHIN', REALLY...
JUST WANTED TO SAY HI, I GUESS.
GRRRR
...

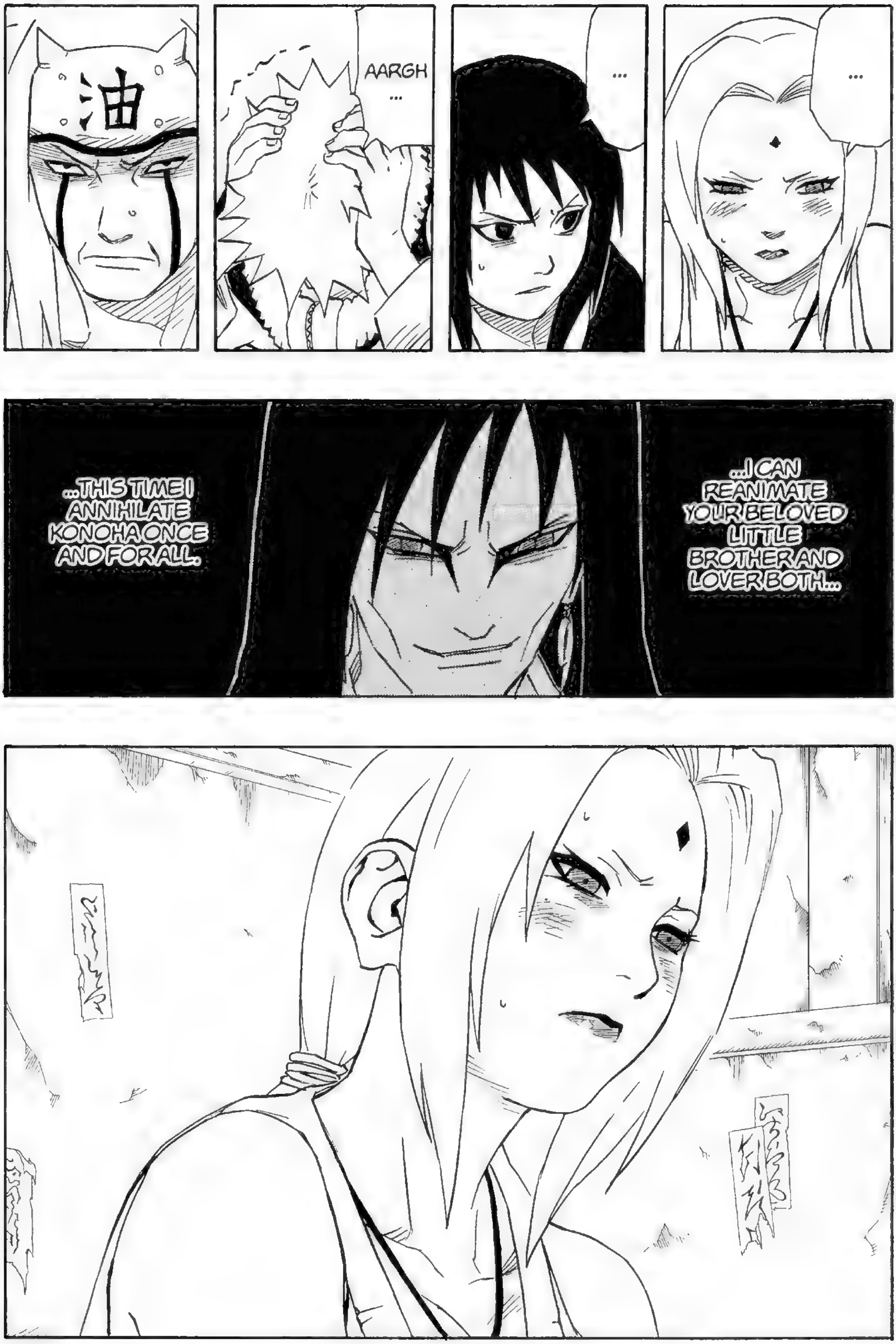

SO WHAT'S UP WITH YOU... WHADDAYA WANT FROM ME?
THEY SAY SHE'S A FEMALE NINJA WHO CAN HEAL ANY INJURY... IS IT REALLY TRUE?
SCARF SCARF
I'LL LAY IT STRAIGHT.
TSUNADE... THE VILLAGE REQUESTS YOU ACCEPT THE TITLE OF FIFTH HOKAGE.
URG!!
...!
!

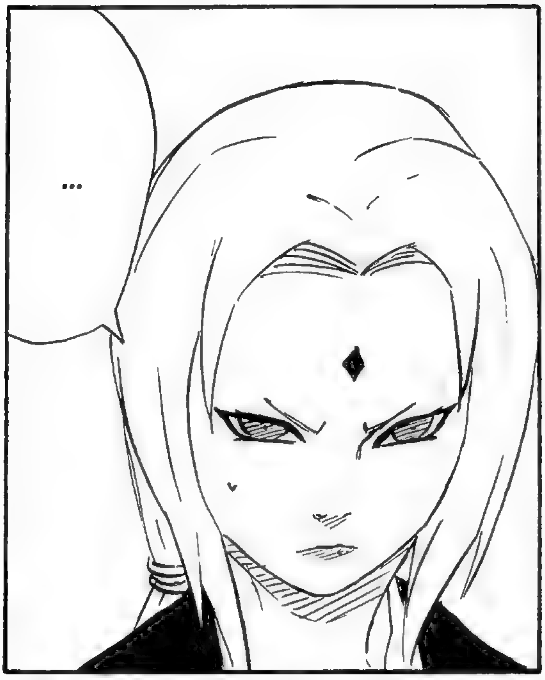
READ THIS WAY


F...FIFTH HOKAGE?!!
HACK! GUGH!
THUD THUD
...! WHERE THE HECK DID THAT COME FROM?!! WHAT'S GOING ON?!
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE THIRD LORD?
LORD THIRD... SO IT WAS TRUE...
OROCHIMARU DID HIM IN, RIGHT...?
I HEARD, STRAIGHT FROM THE SNAKE'S MOUTH, AS IT WERE...
!
...!
...OROCHIMARU DID IT...?
...?!!
OROCHIMARU...?!
HE KILLED THE THIRD HOKAGE?!
WHO THE HECK'S OROCHIMARU?!


...THE THIRD MEMBER OF OUR PRODIGAL THREE.
WHAT?!
BUT I THOUGHT THE THREE GREAT SHINOBI WERE ALL FROM KONOHA!
SO WHY?!
...
JIRAIYA, WHO IS THIS BRAT?
GRR
...
THIS IS UZUMAKI NARUTO...
油
!
SO THIS LAD...HAS THE NINE-TAILS...
...AND WHY HER FOR FIFTH HOKAGE?!
JUST HUSH UP, NARUTO!
...SO!
WELL? DO YOU ACCEPT?

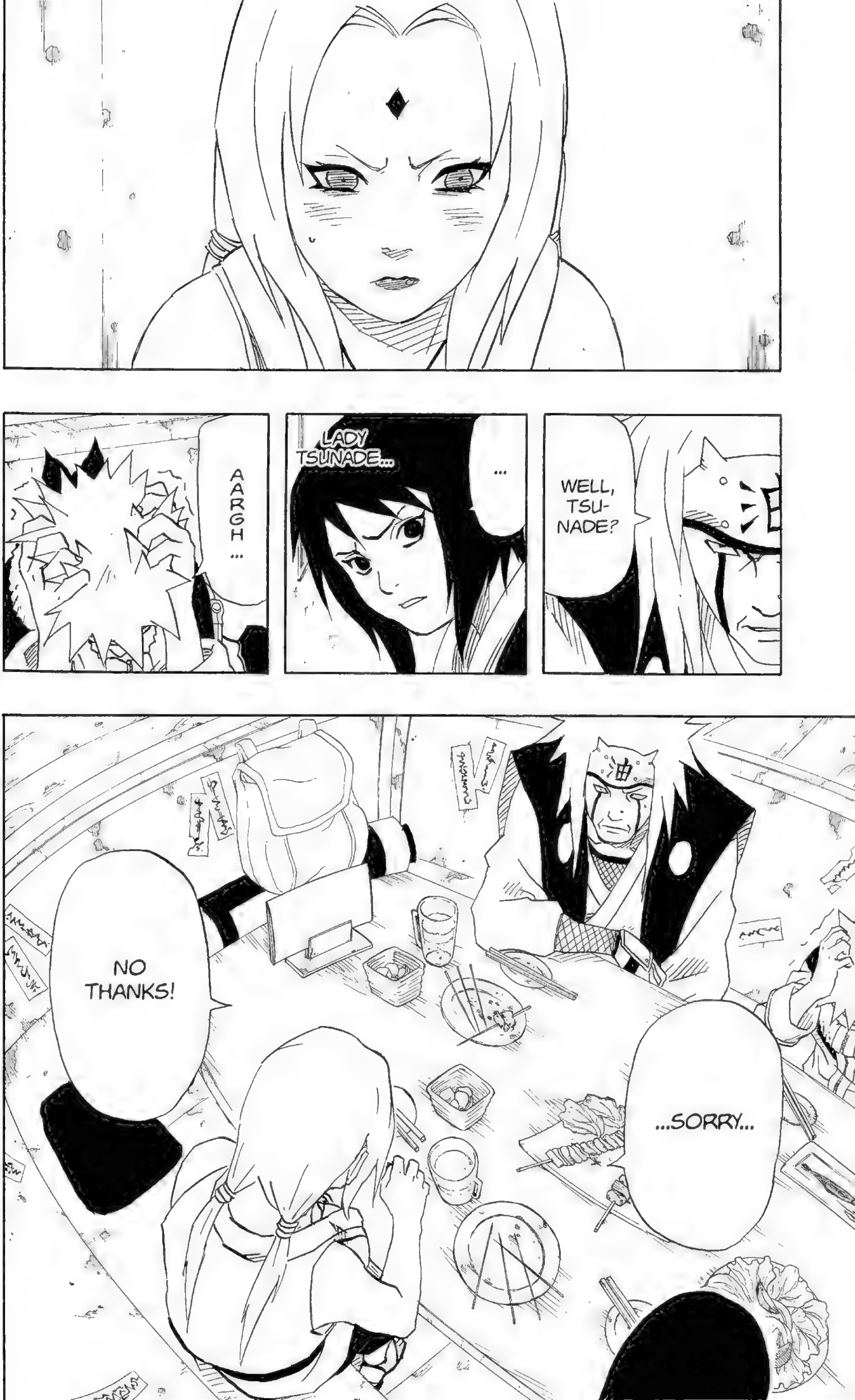
READ THIS WAY


...
...
AARGH ...
...I CAN REANIMATE YOUR BELOVED LITTLE BROTHER AND LOVER BOTH...
...THIS TIME I ANNIHILATE KONOHA ONCE AND FOR ALL.

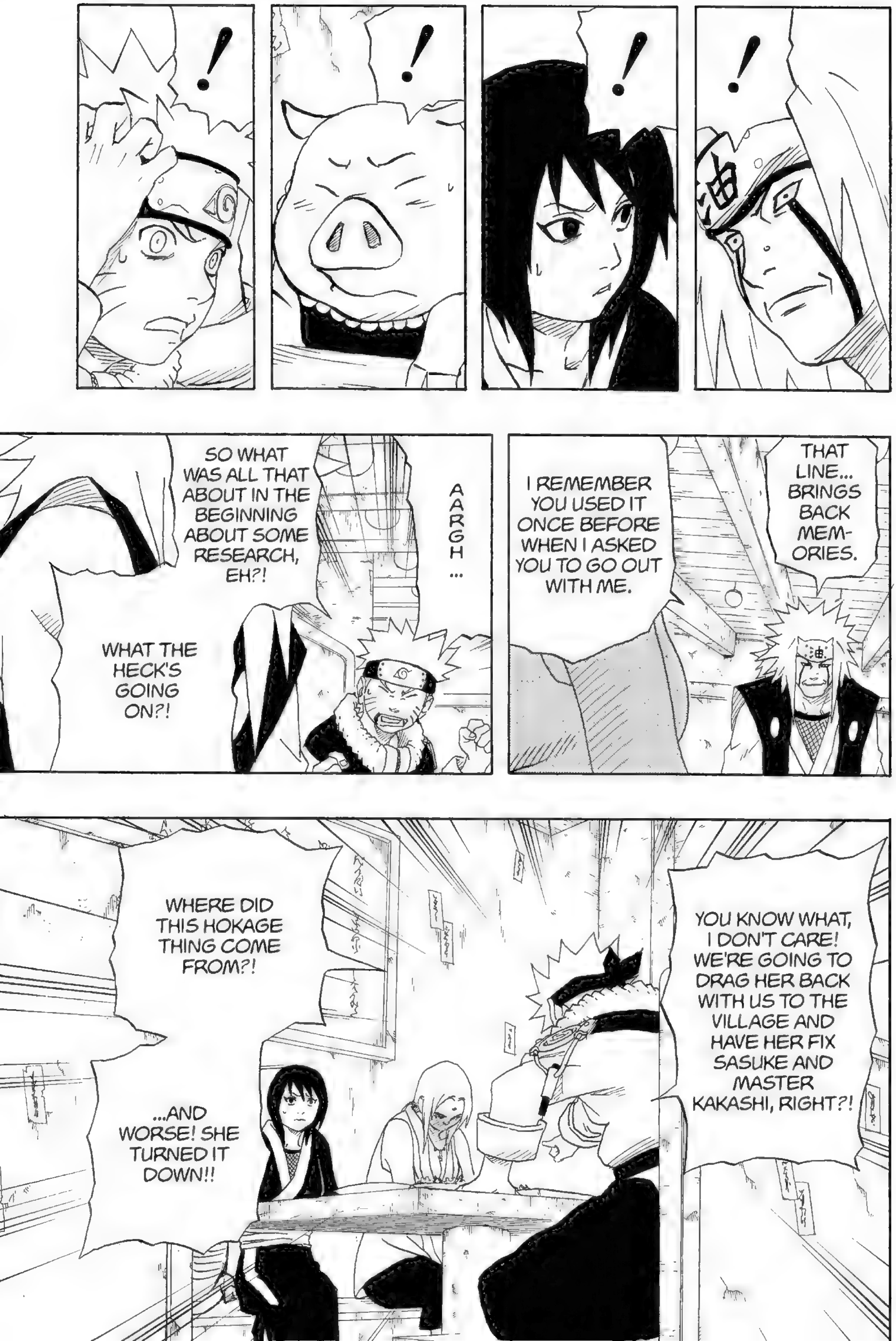


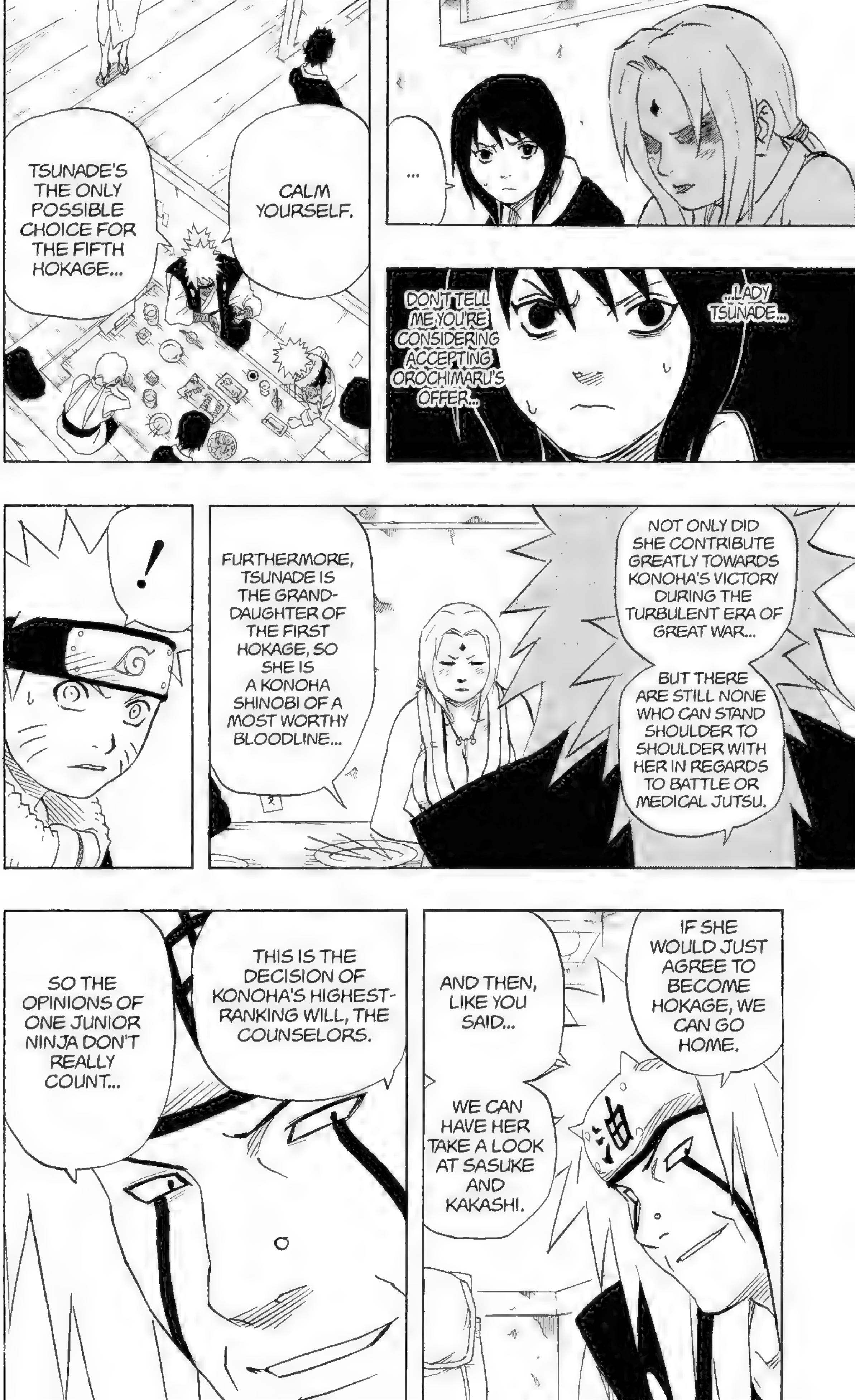
Number 158:

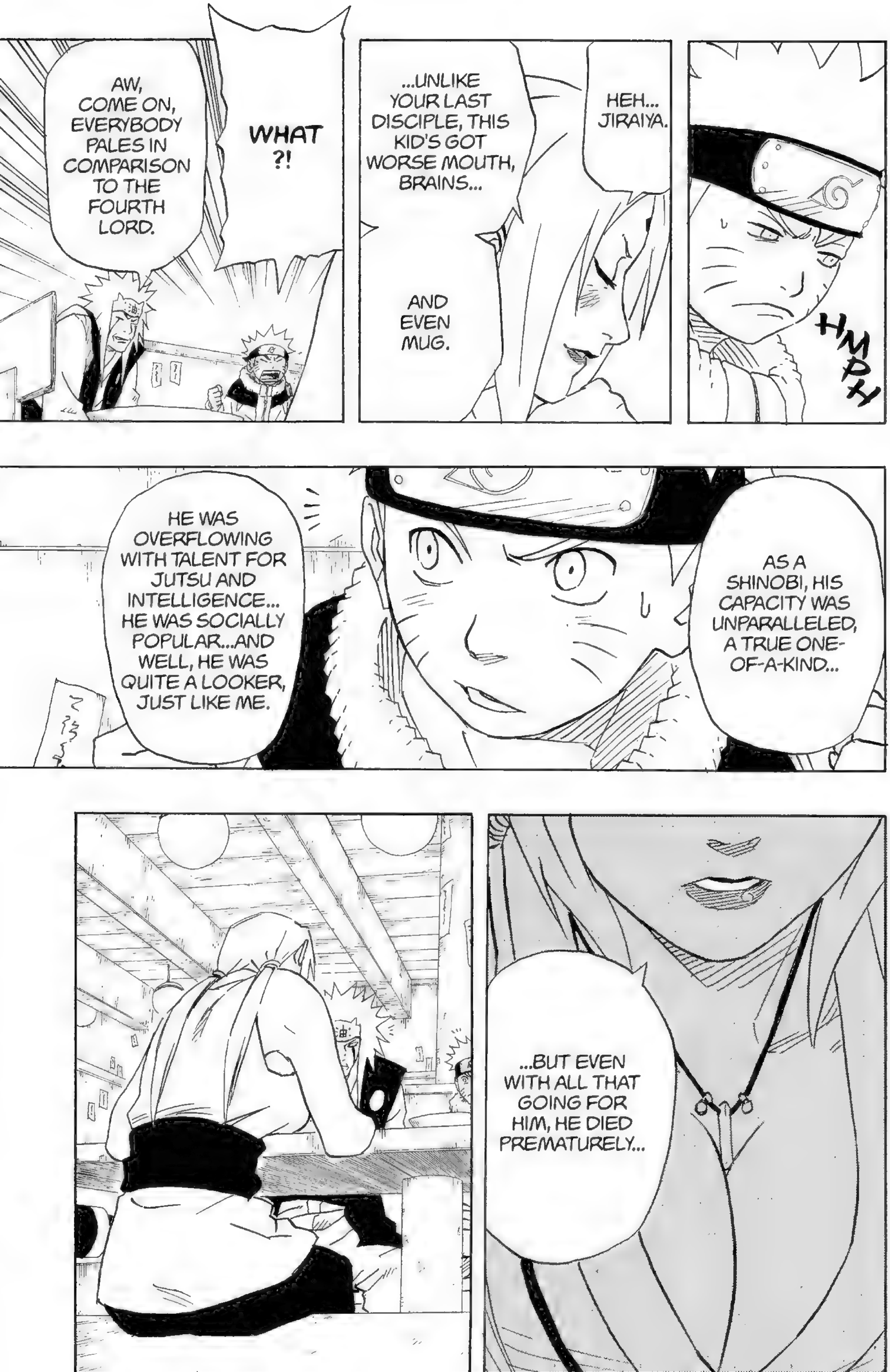
No Forgiveness...!!

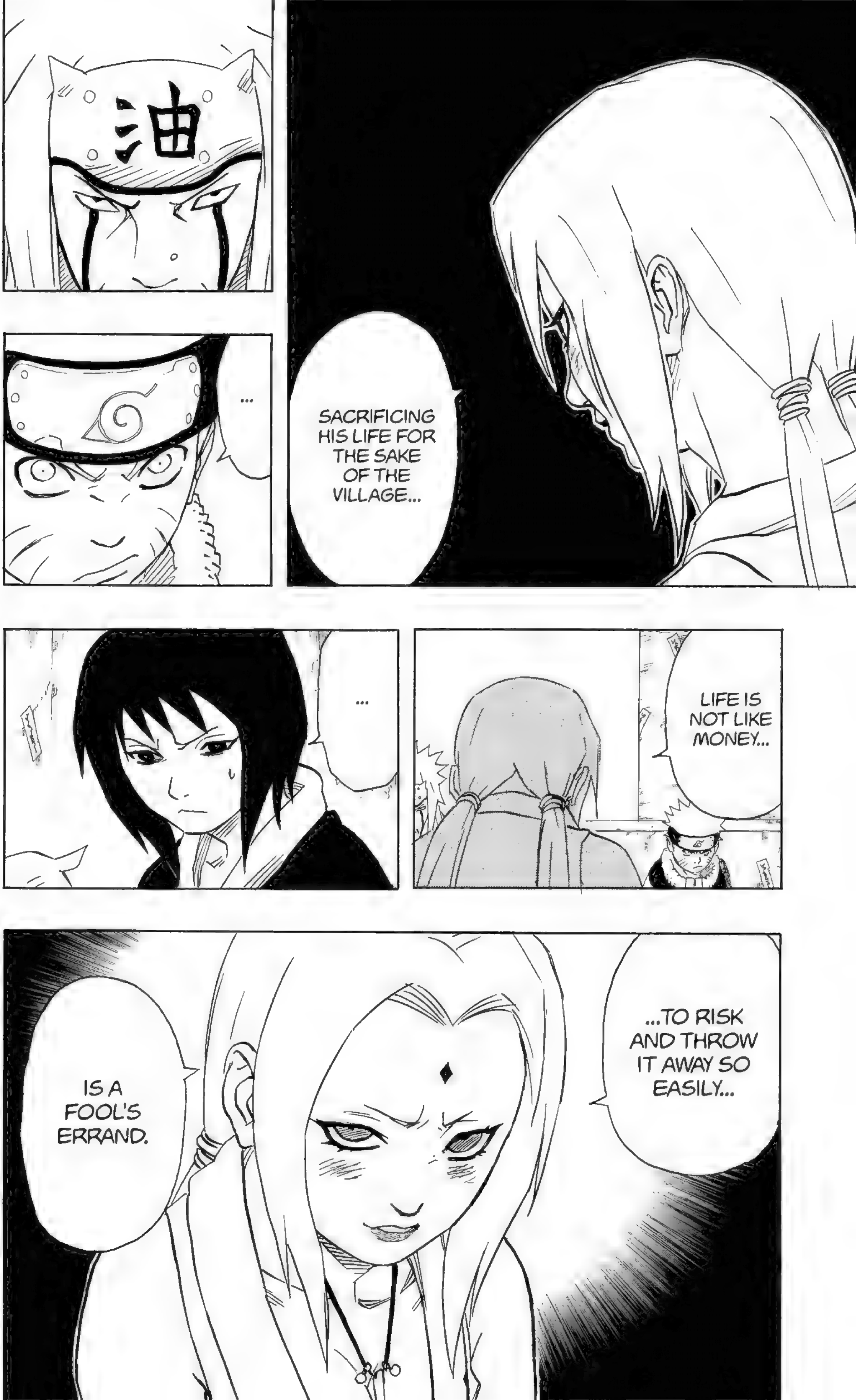

WELL, TSUNADE?
...
LADY TSUNADE...
AARGH...
...SORRY...
NO THANKS!

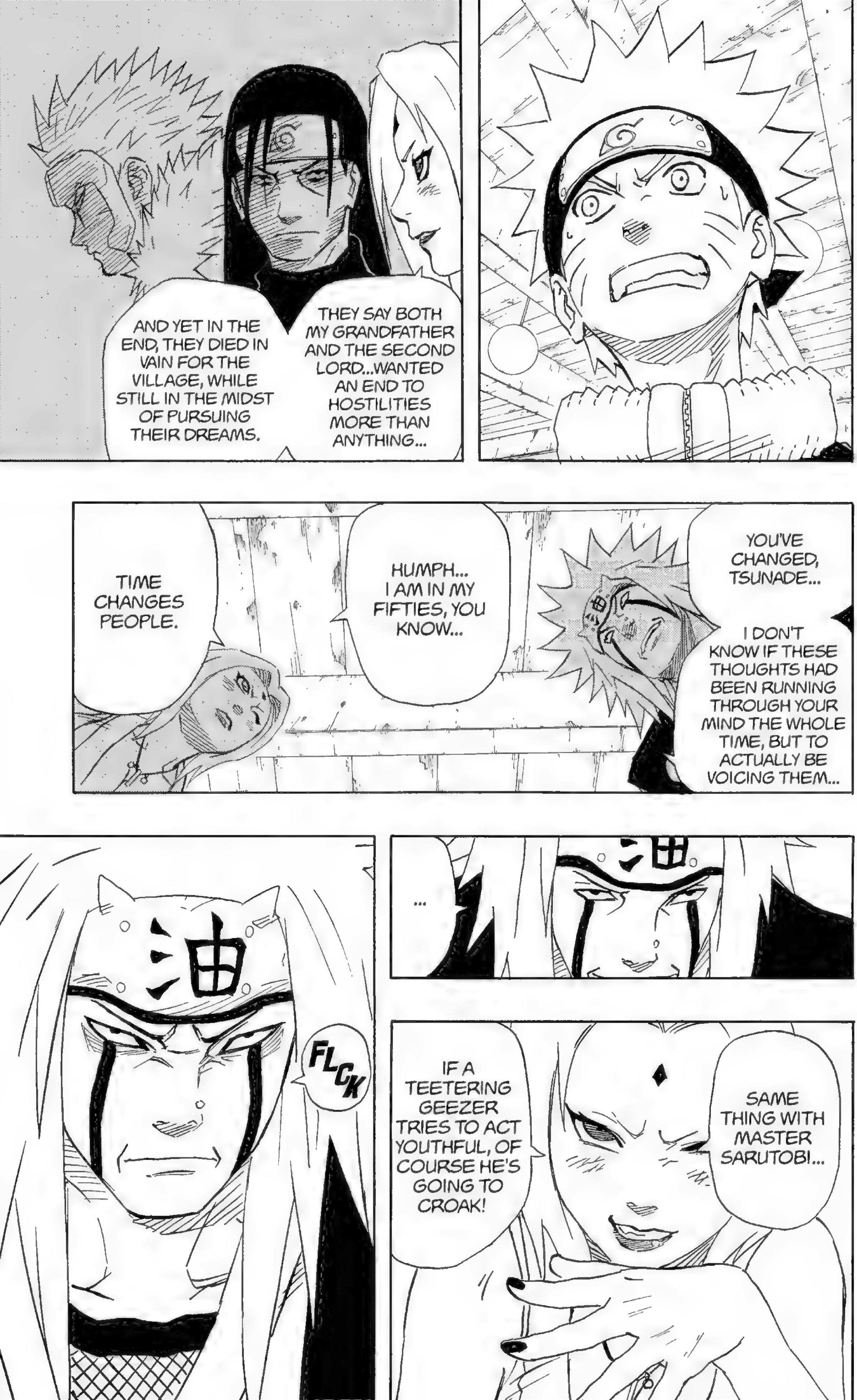
« READ THIS WAY «

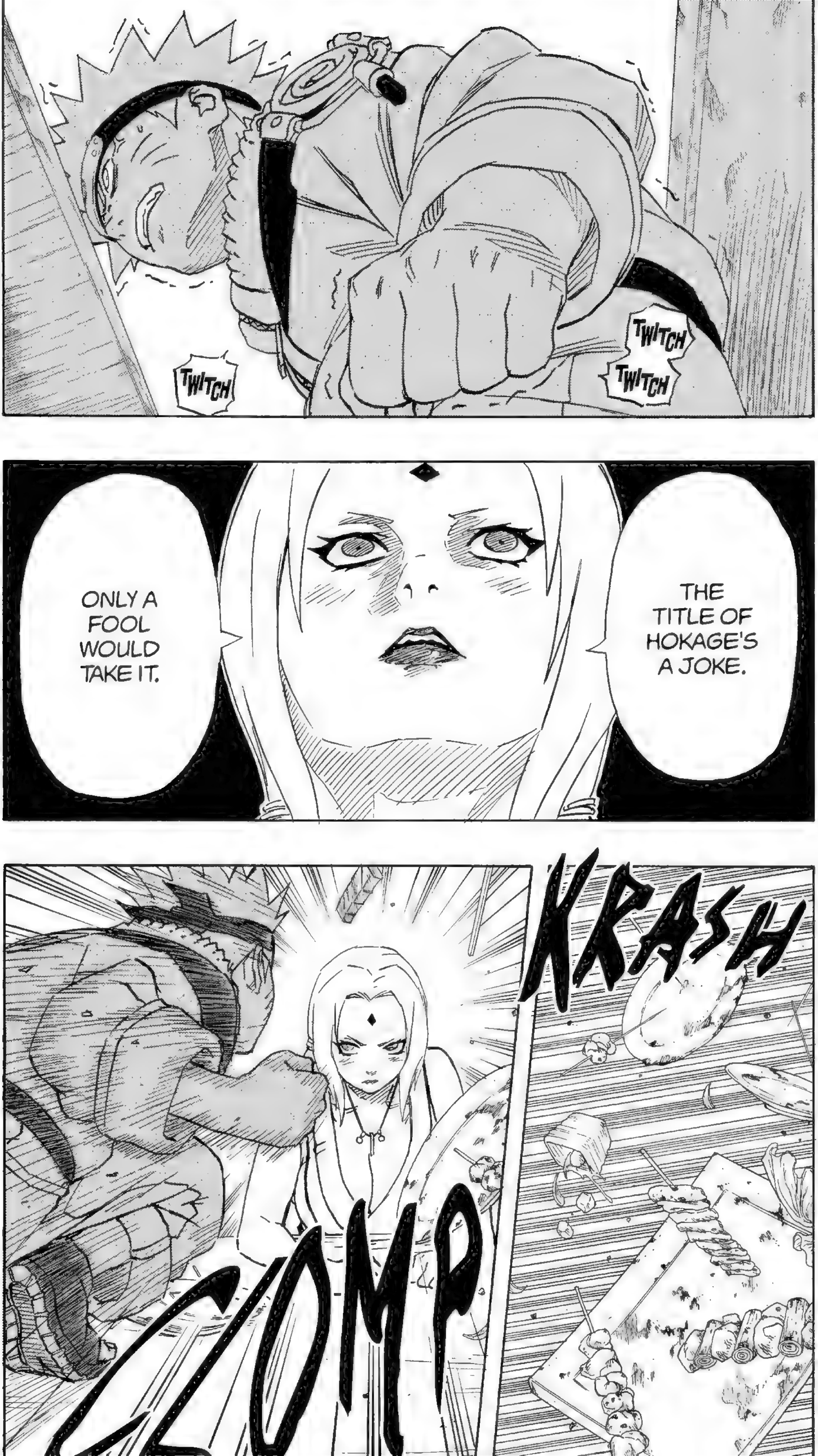

!
!
!
!
THAT LINE... BRINGS BACK MEMORIES.
I REMEMBER YOU USED IT ONCE BEFORE WHEN I ASKED YOU TO GO OUT WITH ME.
AARGH...
SO WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT IN THE BEGINNING ABOUT SOME RESEARCH, EH?!
WHAT THE HECK'S GOING ON?!
YOU KNOW WHAT, I DON'T CARE! WE'RE GOING TO DRAG HER BACK WITH US TO THE VILLAGE AND HAVE HER FIX SASUKE AND MASTER KAKASHI, RIGHT?!
WHERE DID THIS HOKAGE THING COME FROM?!
...AND WORSE! SHE TURNED IT DOWN!!

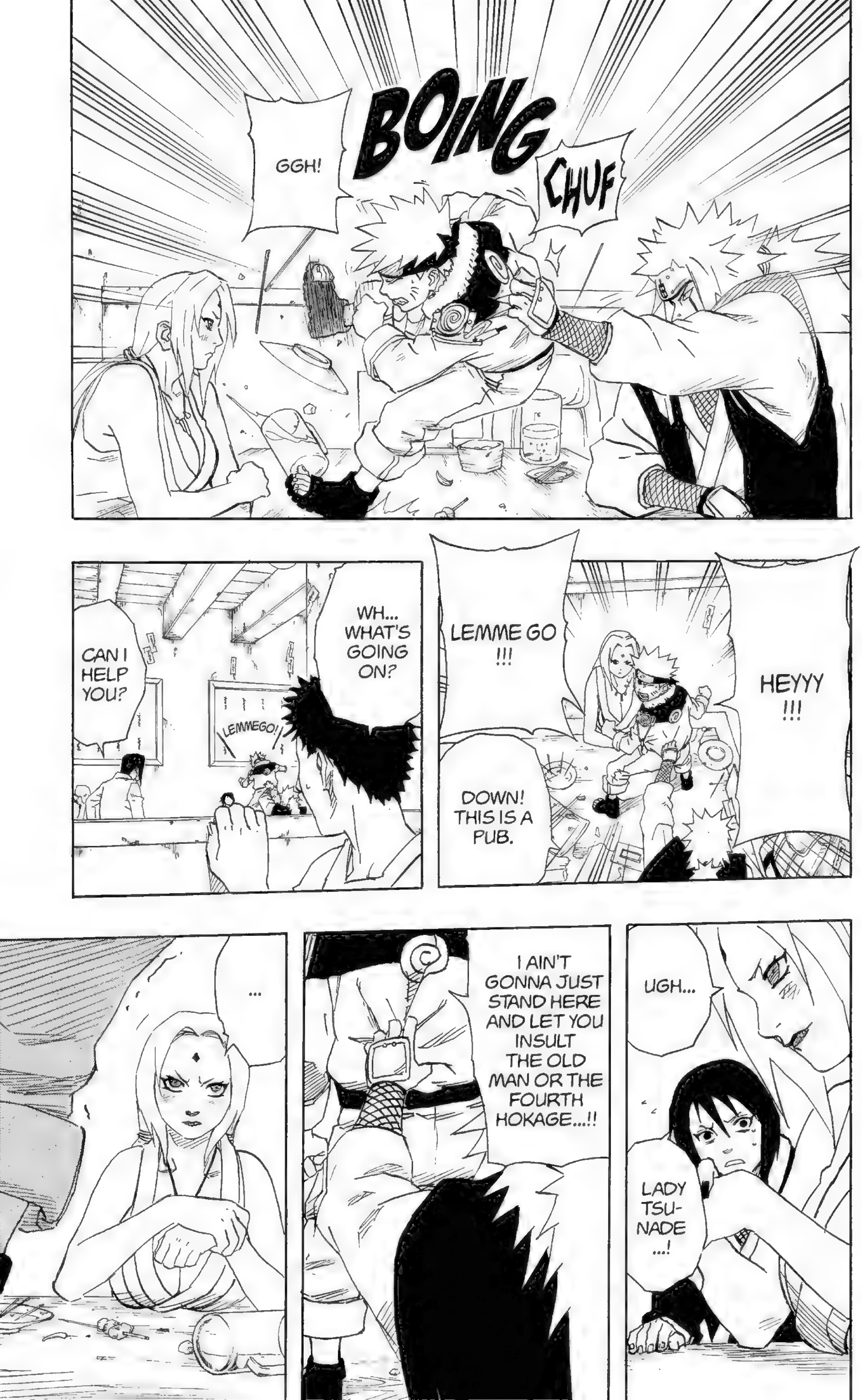

...
...LADY TSUNADE...
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE CONSIDERING ACCEPTING OROCHIMARU'S OFFER...
CALM YOURSELF.
TSUNADE'S THE ONLY POSSIBLE CHOICE FOR THE FIFTH HOKAGE...
NOT ONLY DID SHE CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TOWARDS KONOHA'S VICTORY DURING THE TURBULENT ERA OF GREAT WAR...
BUT THERE ARE STILL NONE WHO CAN STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH HER IN REGARDS TO BATTLE OR MEDICAL JUTSU.
FURTHERMORE, TSUNADE IS THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF THE FIRST HOKAGE, SO SHE IS A KONOHA SHINOBI OF A MOST WORTHY BLOODLINE...
!
IF SHE WOULD JUST AGREE TO BECOME HOKAGE, WE CAN GO HOME.
AND THEN, LIKE YOU SAID...
WE CAN HAVE HER TAKE A LOOK AT SASUKE AND KAKASHI.
THIS IS THE DECISION OF KONOHA'S HIGHEST-RANKING WILL, THE COUNSELORS.
SO THE OPINIONS OF ONE JUNIOR NINJA DON'T REALLY COUNT...

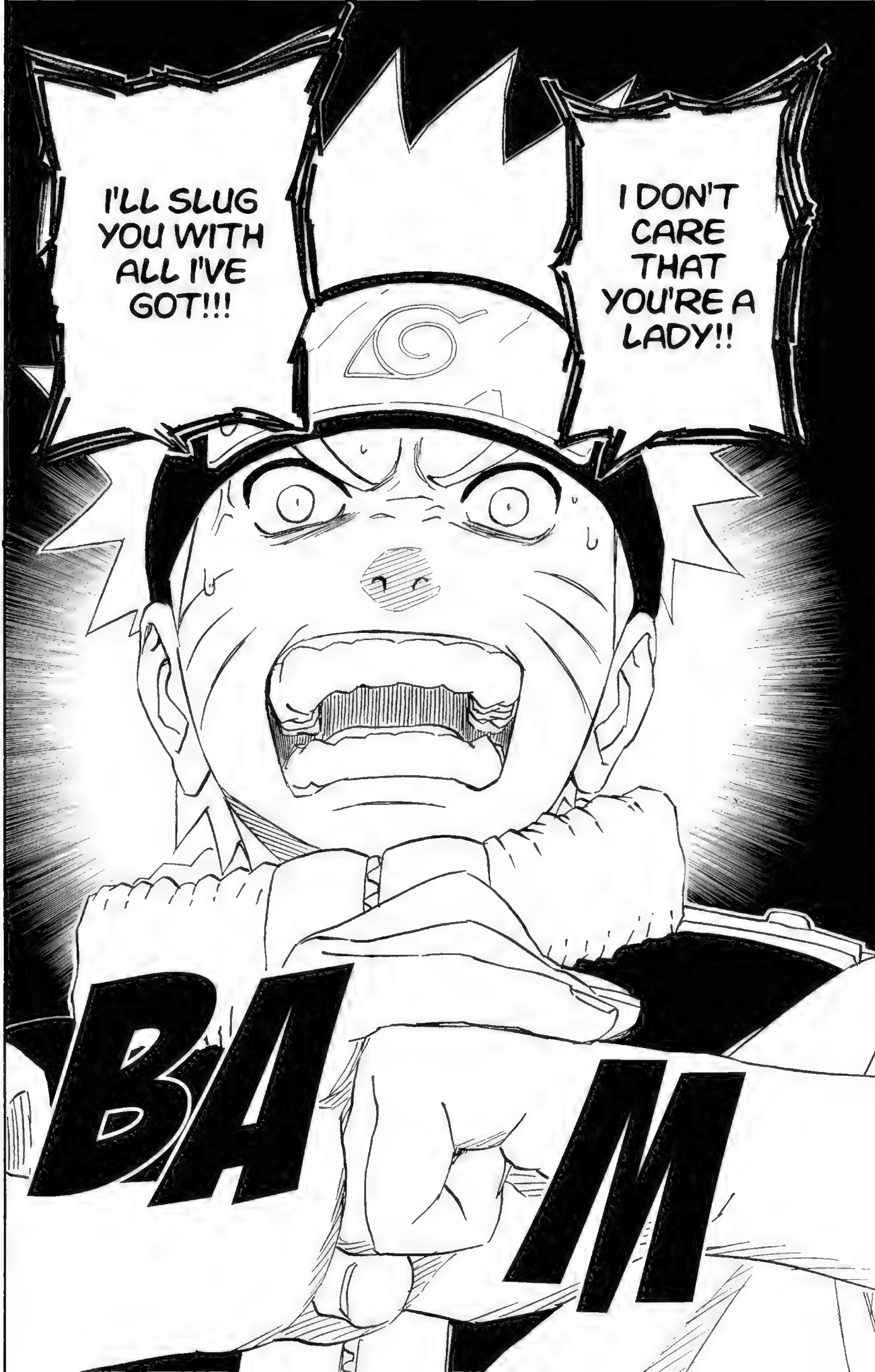

HMPH
HEH... JIRAIYA.
...UNLIKE YOUR LAST DISCIPLE, THIS KID'S GOT WORSE MOUTH, BRAINS...
AND EVEN MUG.
WHAT ?!
AW, COME ON, EVERYBODY PALES IN COMPARISON TO THE FOURTH LORD.
AS A SHINOBI, HIS CAPACITY WAS UNPARALLELED, A TRUE ONE-OF-A-KIND...
HE WAS OVERFLOWING WITH TALENT FOR JUTSU AND INTELLIGENCE... HE WAS SOCIALLY POPULAR...AND WELL, HE WAS QUITE A LOOKER, JUST LIKE ME.
...BUT EVEN WITH ALL THAT GOING FOR HIM, HE DIED PREMATURELY...


油
SACRIFICING HIS LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF THE VILLAGE...
...
LIFE IS NOT LIKE MONEY...
...
...TO RISK AND THROW IT AWAY SO EASILY...
IS A FOOL'S ERRAND.

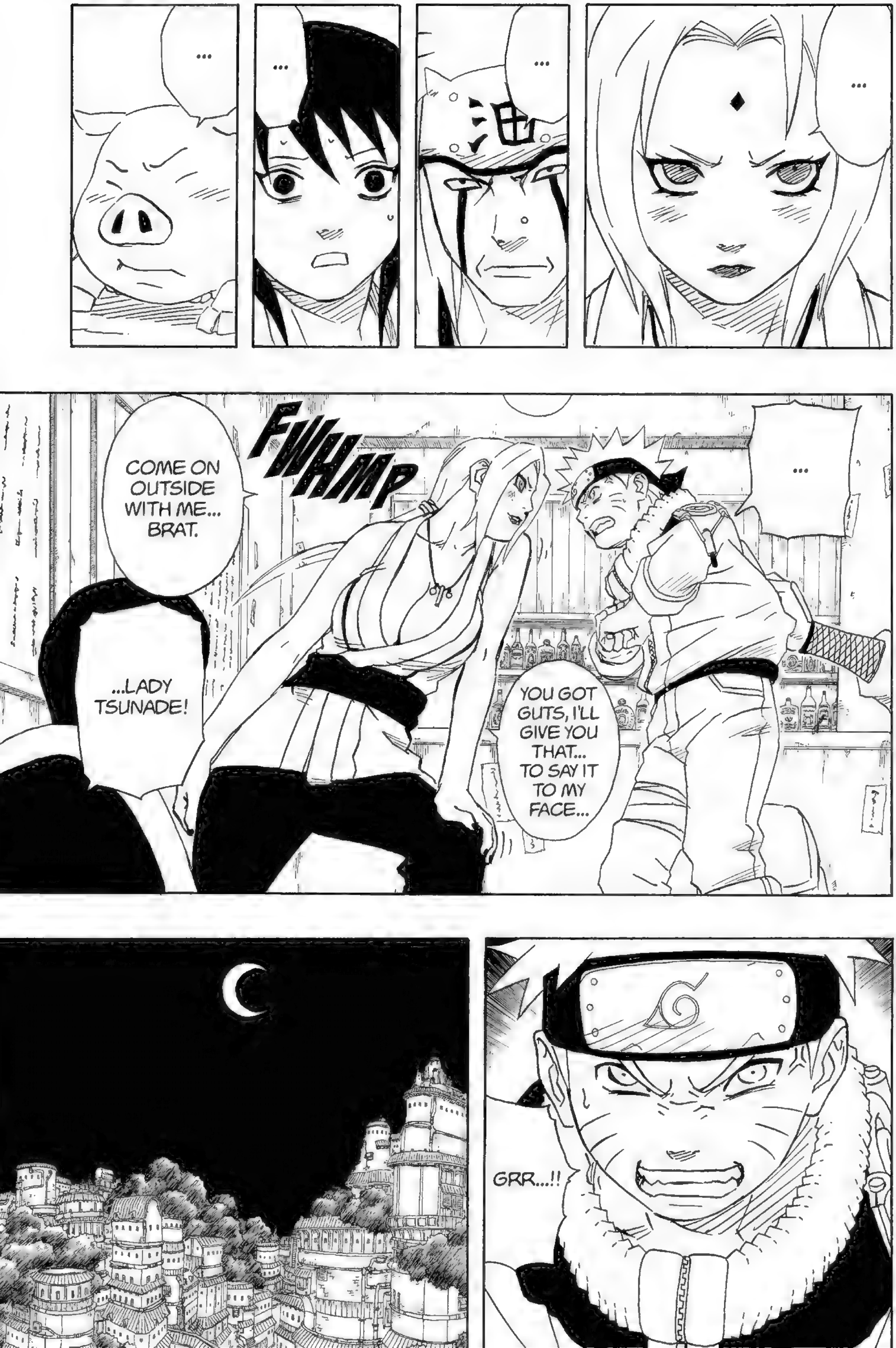

THEY SAY BOTH MY GRANDFATHER AND THE SECOND LORD...WANTED AN END TO HOSTILITIES MORE THAN ANYTHING...
AND YET IN THE END, THEY DIED IN VAIN FOR THE VILLAGE, WHILE STILL IN THE MIDST OF PURSUING THEIR DREAMS.
YOU'VE CHANGED, TSUNADE...
I DON'T KNOW IF THESE THOUGHTS HAD BEEN RUNNING THROUGH YOUR MIND THE WHOLE TIME, BUT TO ACTUALLY BE VOICING THEM...
HUMPH... I AM IN MY FIFTIES, YOU KNOW...
TIME CHANGES PEOPLE.
...
SAME THING WITH MASTER SARUTOBI...
IF A TEETERING GEEZER TRIES TO ACT YOUTHFUL, OF COURSE HE'S GOING TO CROAK!
FLCK

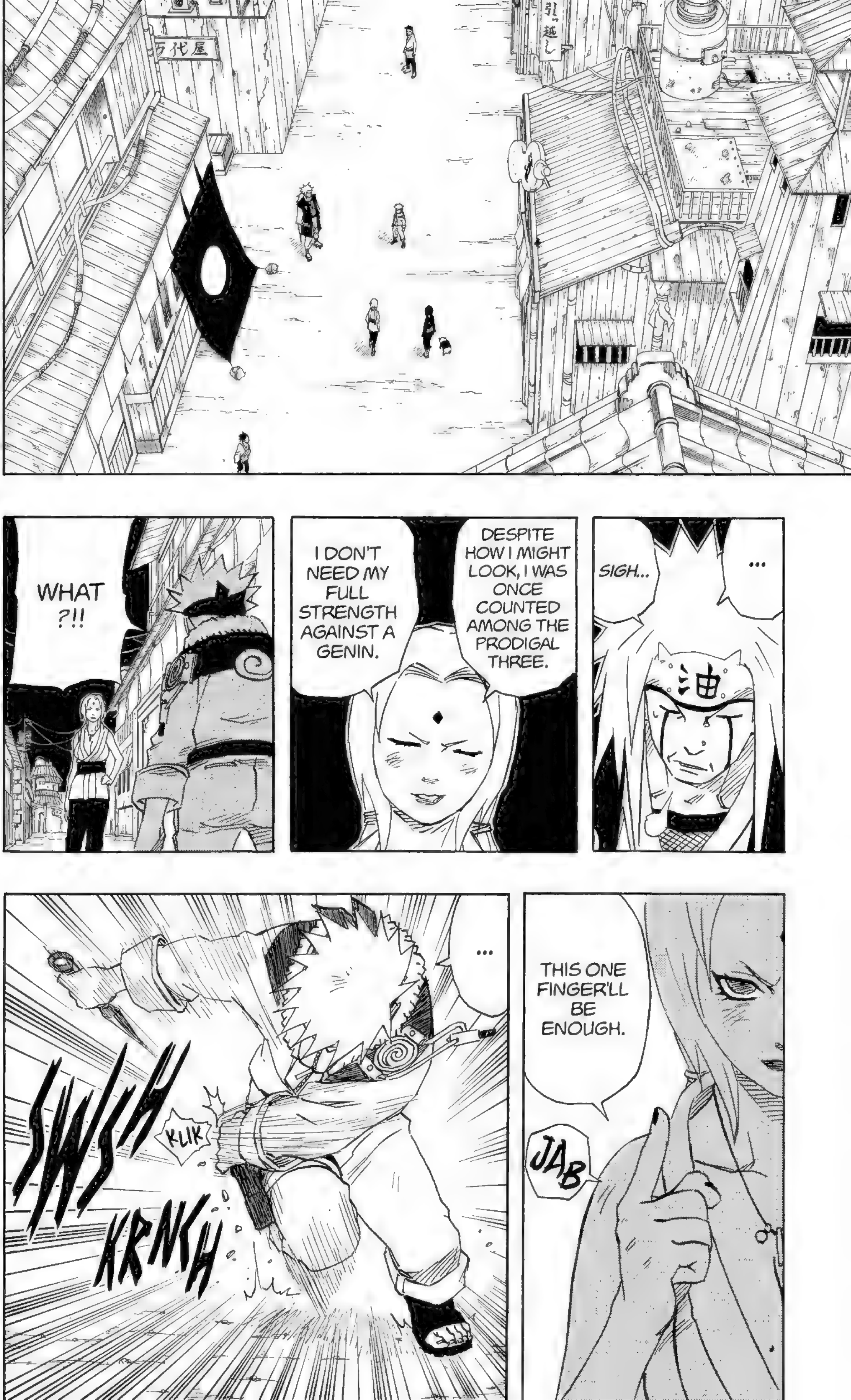

TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
THE TITLE OF HOKAGE'S A JOKE.
ONLY A FOOL WOULD TAKE IT.
KRASH
ZOMP

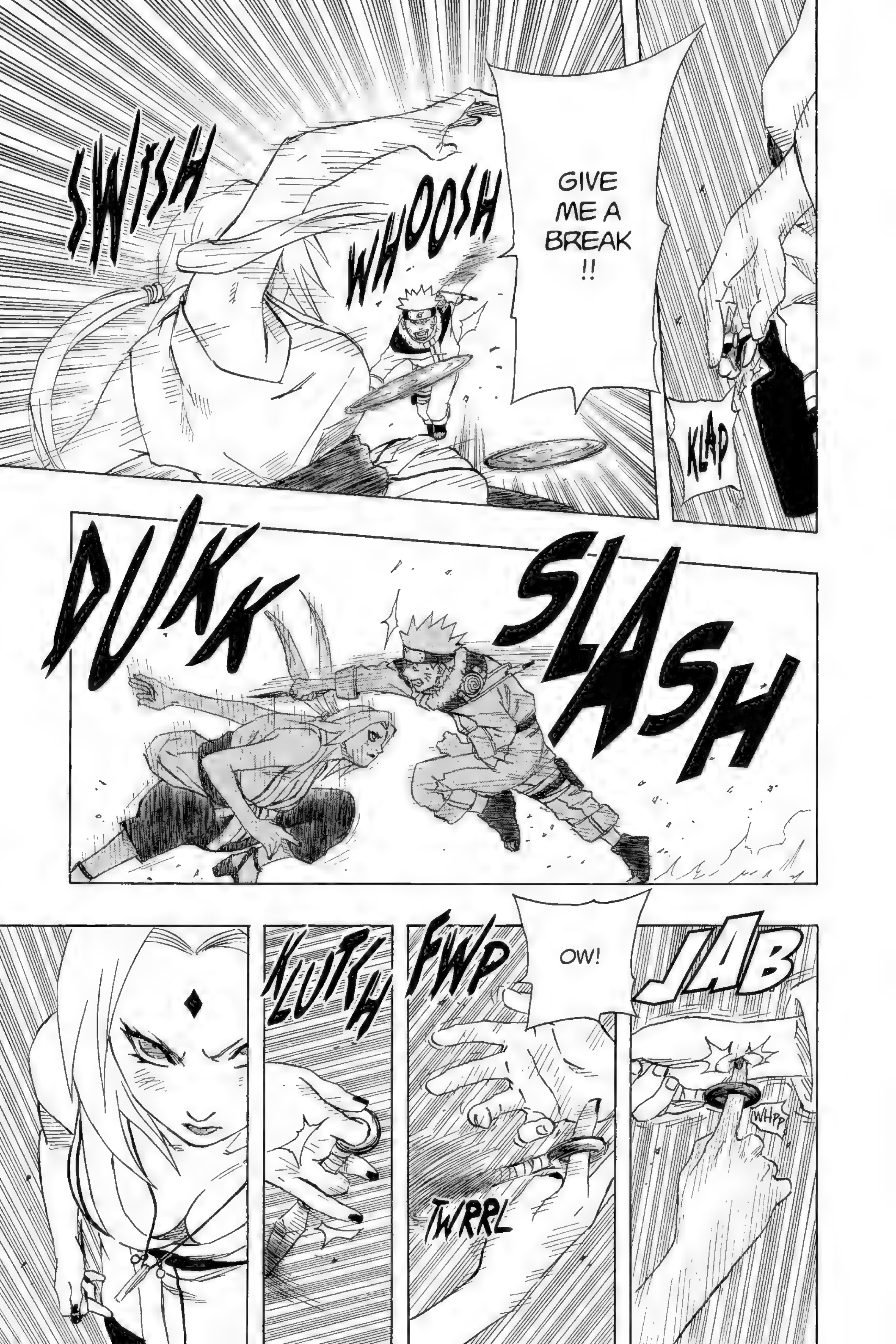

BOING
CHUF
GGH!
HEYYY !!!
LEMME GO !!!
DOWN! THIS IS A PUB.
WH... WHAT'S GOING ON?
LEMMEGO!!
CAN I HELP YOU?
UGH...
LADY TSUNADE ...!
I AIN'T GONNA JUST STAND HERE AND LET YOU INSULT THE OLD MAN OR THE FOURTH HOKAGE...!!
...

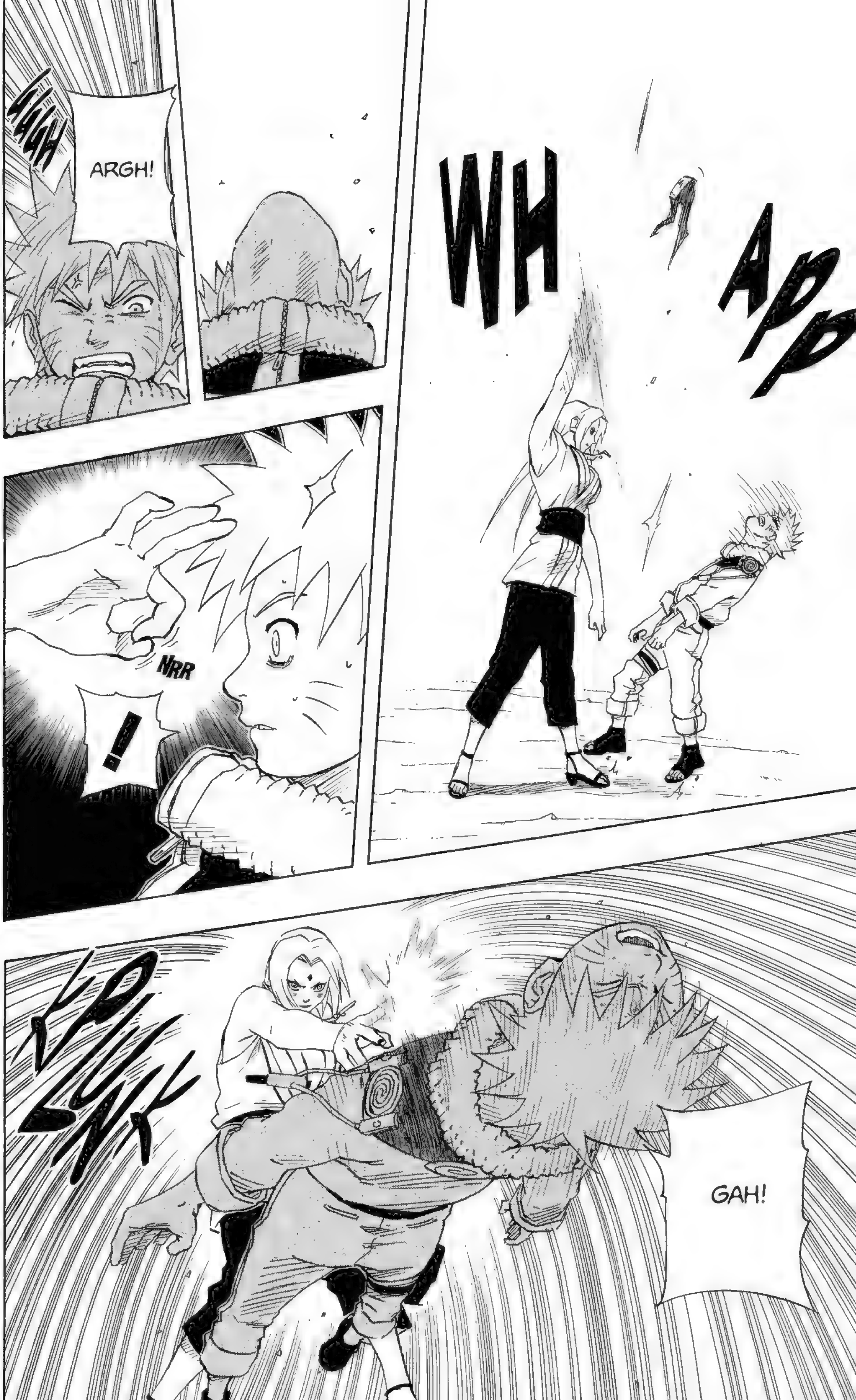

I DON'T CARE THAT YOU'RE A LADY!!
I'LL SLUG YOU WITH ALL I'VE GOT!!!
BAM

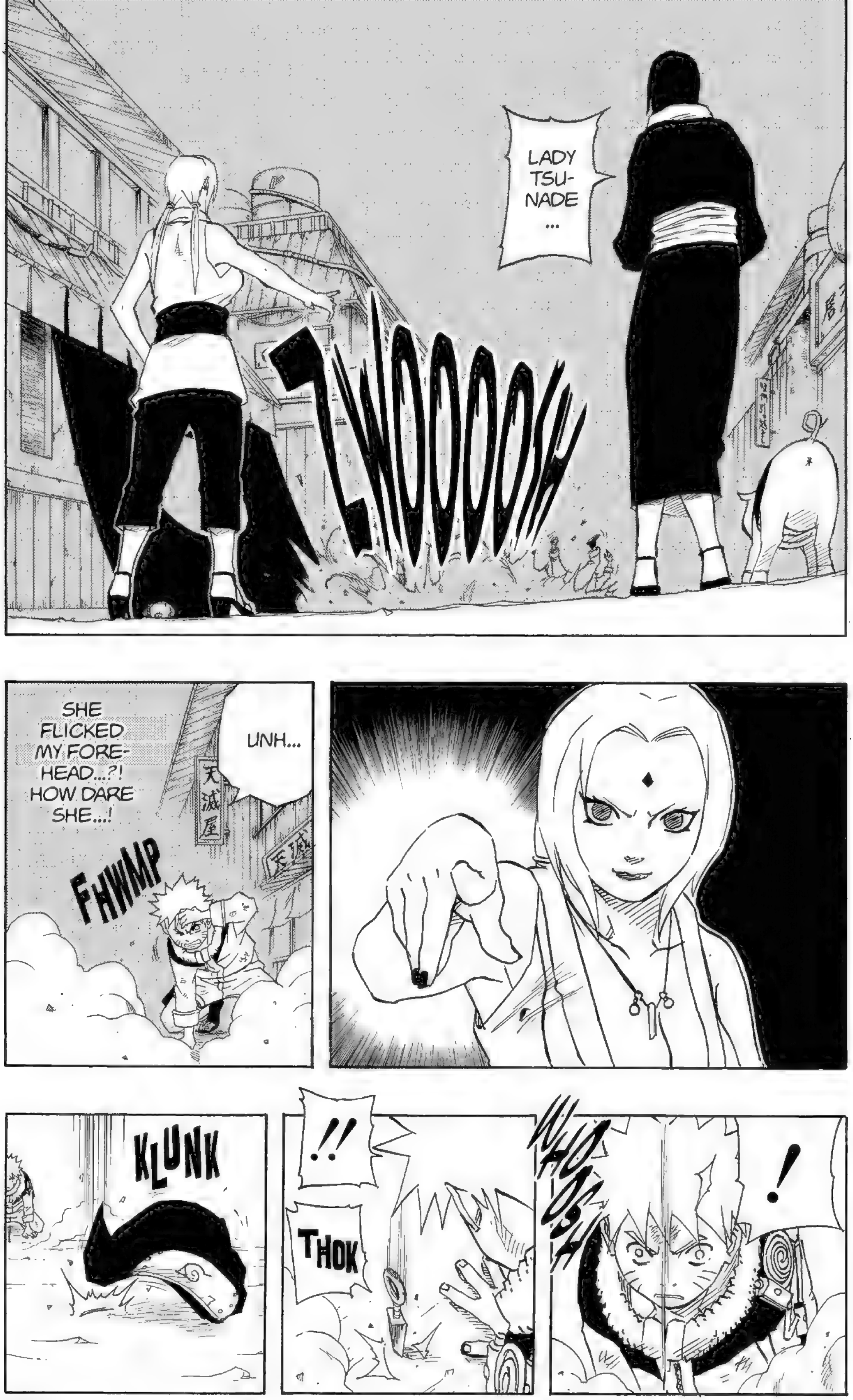
READ THIS WAY

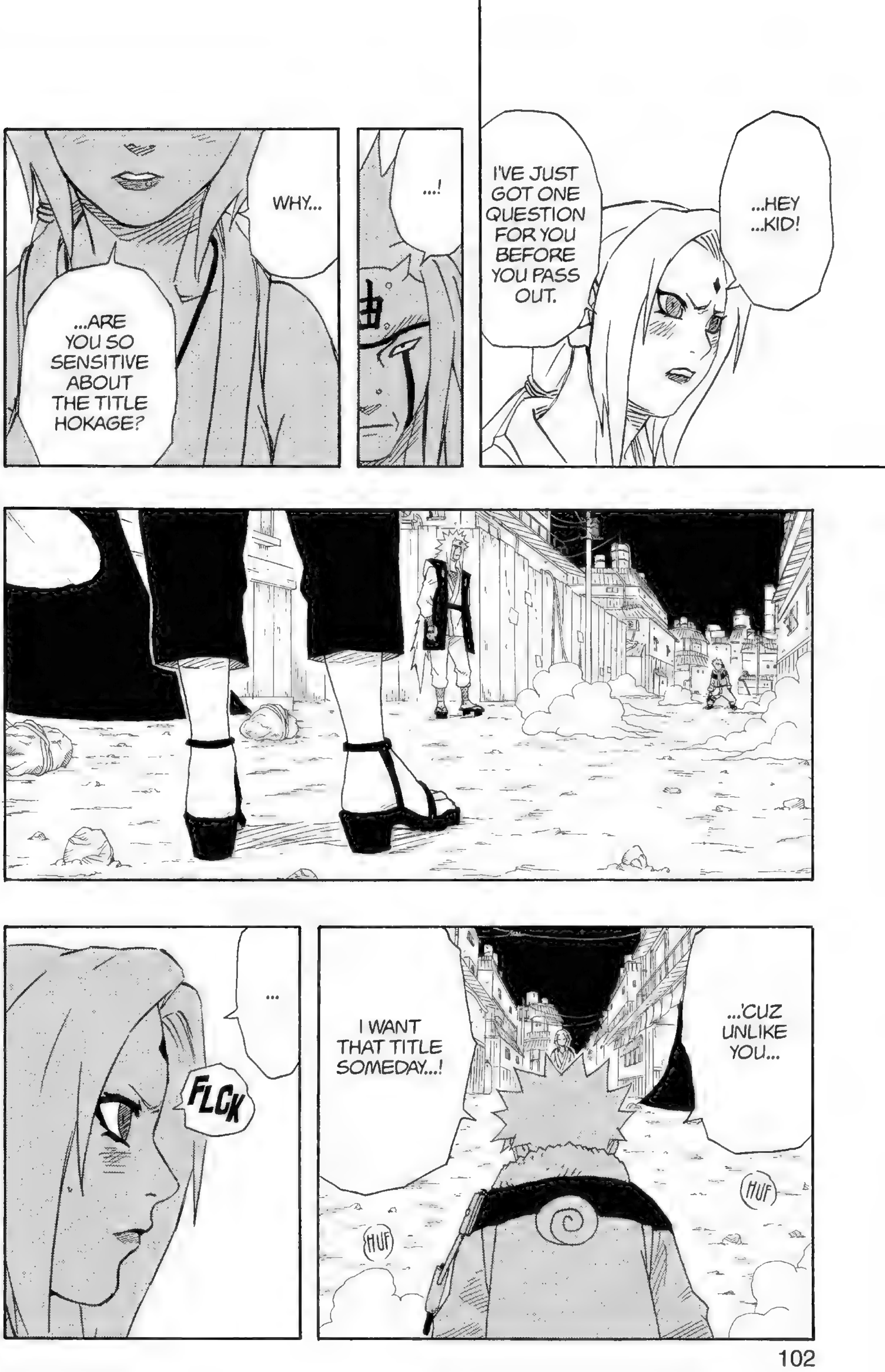

...
...
...
...
...
FWHMP
COME ON OUTSIDE WITH ME... BRAT.
YOU GOT GUTS, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT... TO SAY IT TO MY FACE...
...LADY TSUNADE!
GRR...!!

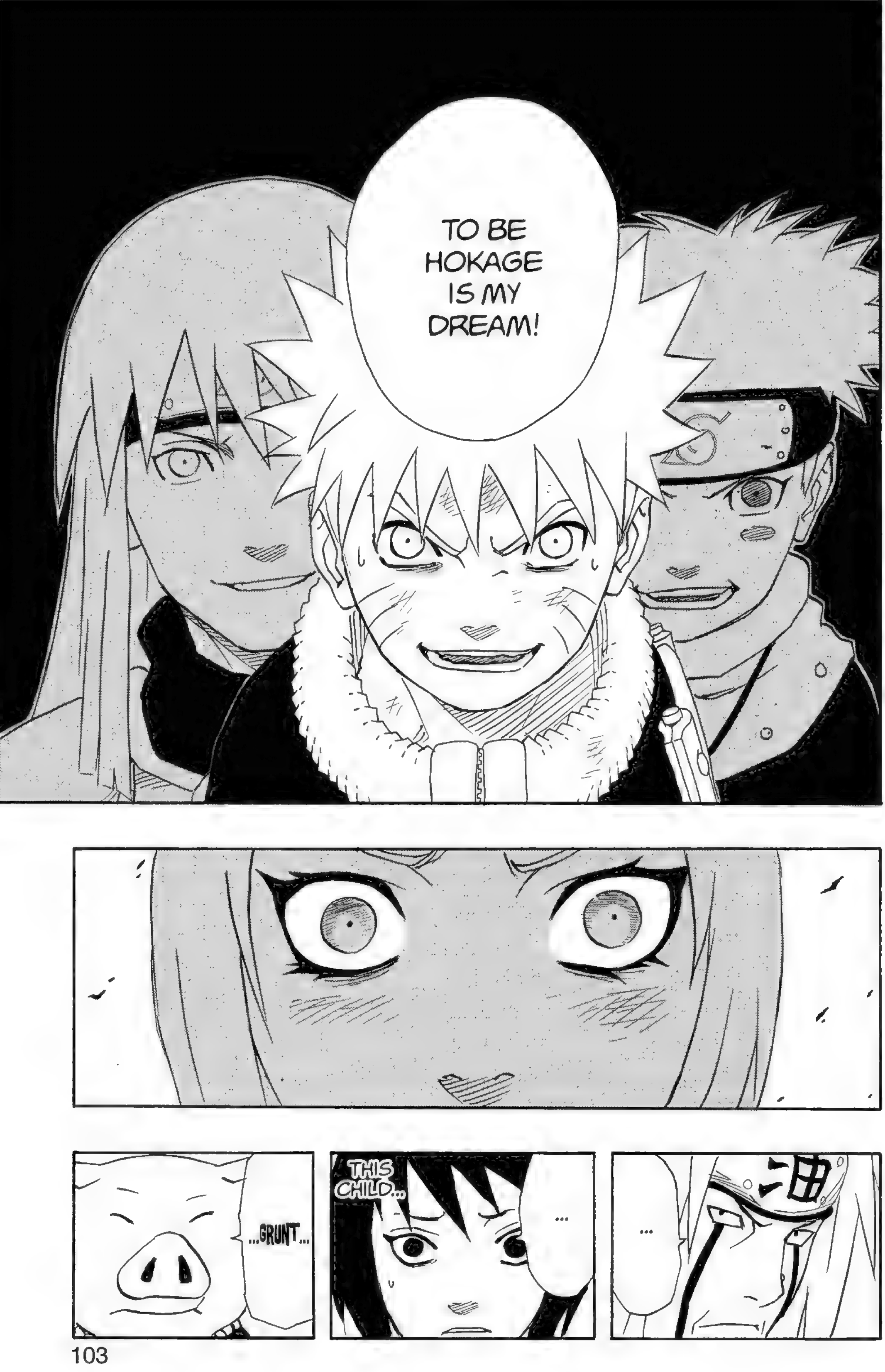

引っ越し
万代屋
...
SIGH...
油
DESPITE HOW I MIGHT LOOK, I WAS ONCE COUNTED AMONG THE PRODIGAL THREE.
I DON'T NEED MY FULL STRENGTH AGAINST A GENIN.
WHAT ?!!
THIS ONE FINGER'LL BE ENOUGH.
JAB
...
SWISH
KLIK
KRNCH

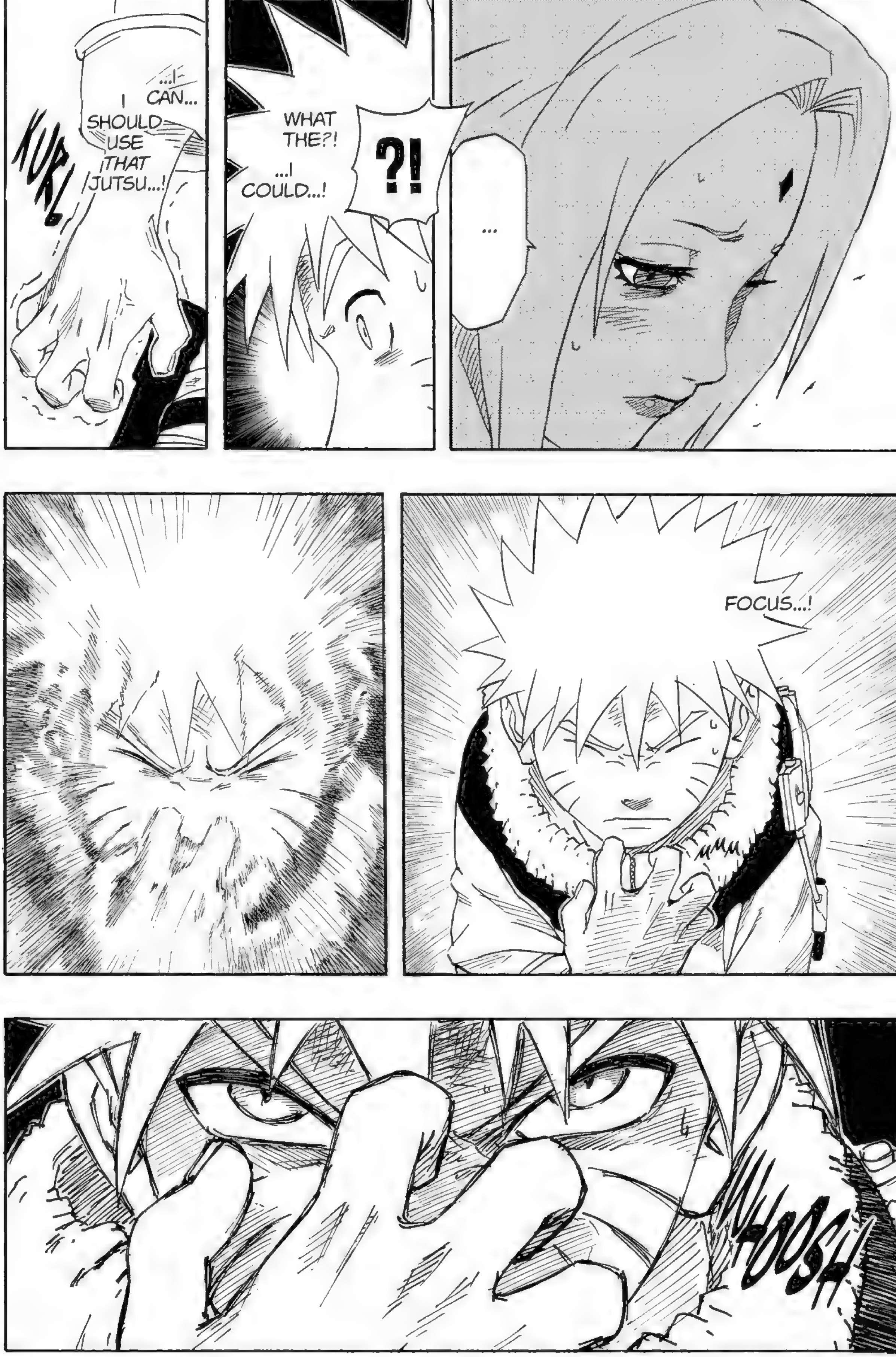

KLAP
GIVE ME A BREAK !!
WHOOSH
SWISH
SLASH
DUKK
JAB
WHPP
OW!
FWP
TWRRL
KLUTCH


WHAPP
UUGH
ARGH!
NRR
!
KRUNK
GAH!

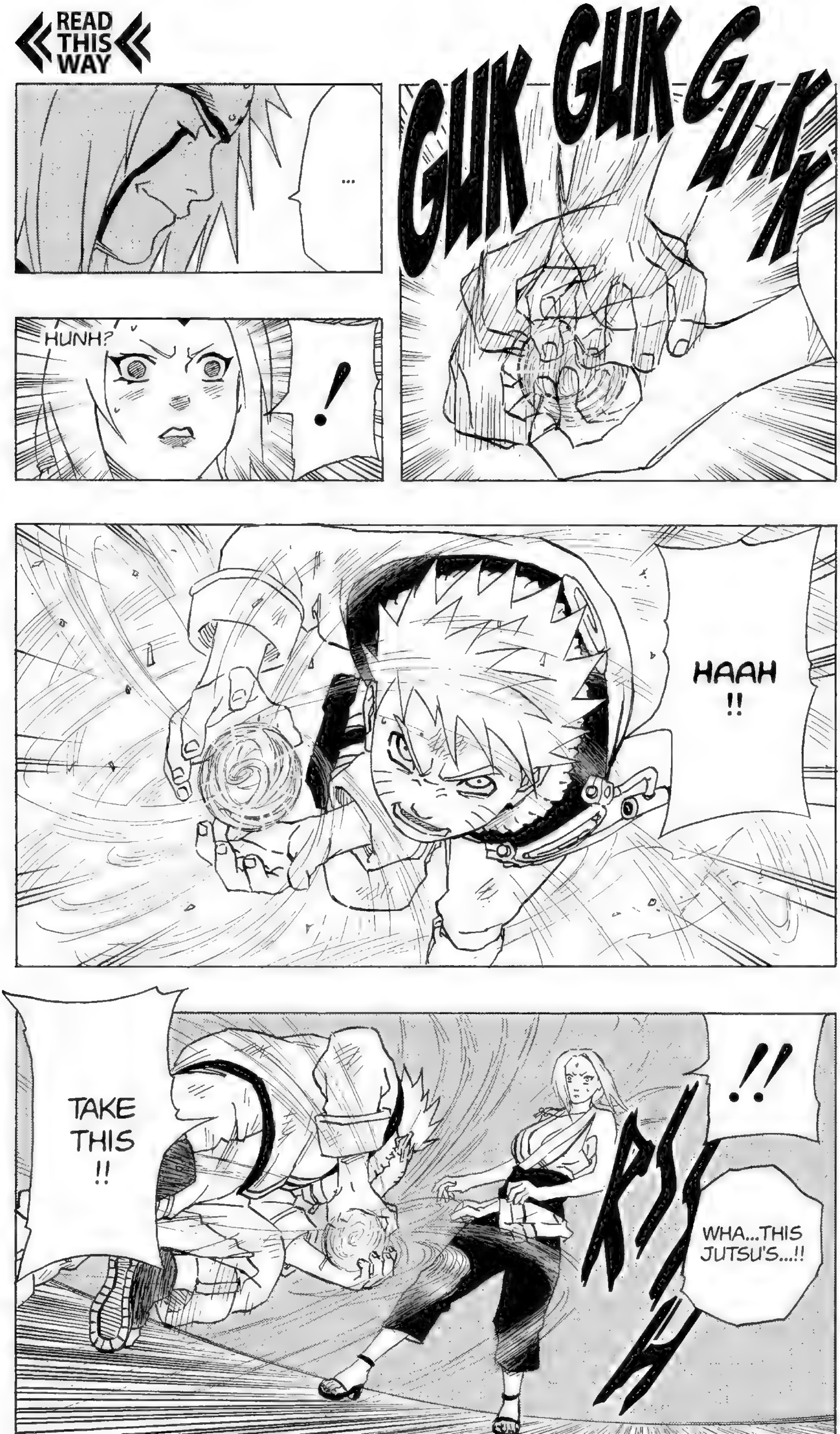

LADY TSUNADE...
ZWOOOSH
UNH...
SHE FLICKED MY FOREHEAD...?! HOW DARE SHE...!
FHWMP
!
WHOOSH
!!
THOK
KLUNK


...HEY ...KID!
I'VE JUST GOT ONE QUESTION FOR YOU BEFORE YOU PASS OUT.
...!
WHY...
...ARE YOU SO SENSITIVE ABOUT THE TITLE HOKAGE?
...'CUZ UNLIKE YOU...
HUF
I WANT THAT TITLE SOMEDAY...!
HUF
...
FLCK


TO BE HOKAGE IS MY DREAM!
...
...
THIS CHILD...
...GRUNT...


...
?!
WHAT THE?!
...I COULD...!
...I CAN...
I SHOULD USE THAT JUTSU...!
KURL
FOCUS...!
WHOOSH

READ THIS WAY


GUK GUK GUK
...
HUNH?
!
HAAH!!
TAKE THIS!!
!!
GRSSH
WHA...THIS JUTSU'S...!!

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 28

RECENTLY, ALL SORTS OF THINGS ARE BECOMING DIGITIZED. THE *NARUTO* COMICS ARE APPARENTLY THE FIRST COMIC BOOK SERIES THAT IS EDITED DIGITALLY.

WHEN I WAS A COLLEGE STUDENT, THERE WAS A PARTICULAR MUSIC VIDEO THAT I REALLY GOT HOOKED ON. IT WAS KEN ISHII'S MUSIC VIDEO, EXTRA. IT CONTAINS THE WORK OF ONE OF MY FAVORITE ANIMATORS, MR. KOJI MORIMOTO. THE VIDEO WAS SHOWN OVER AND OVER ON MTV, AND GOT BIG ENOUGH THAT IT EVEN BECAME A CONVERSATION TOPIC AMONG MY COLLEGE FRIENDS. PRETTY AWESOME, THEY'D SAY!

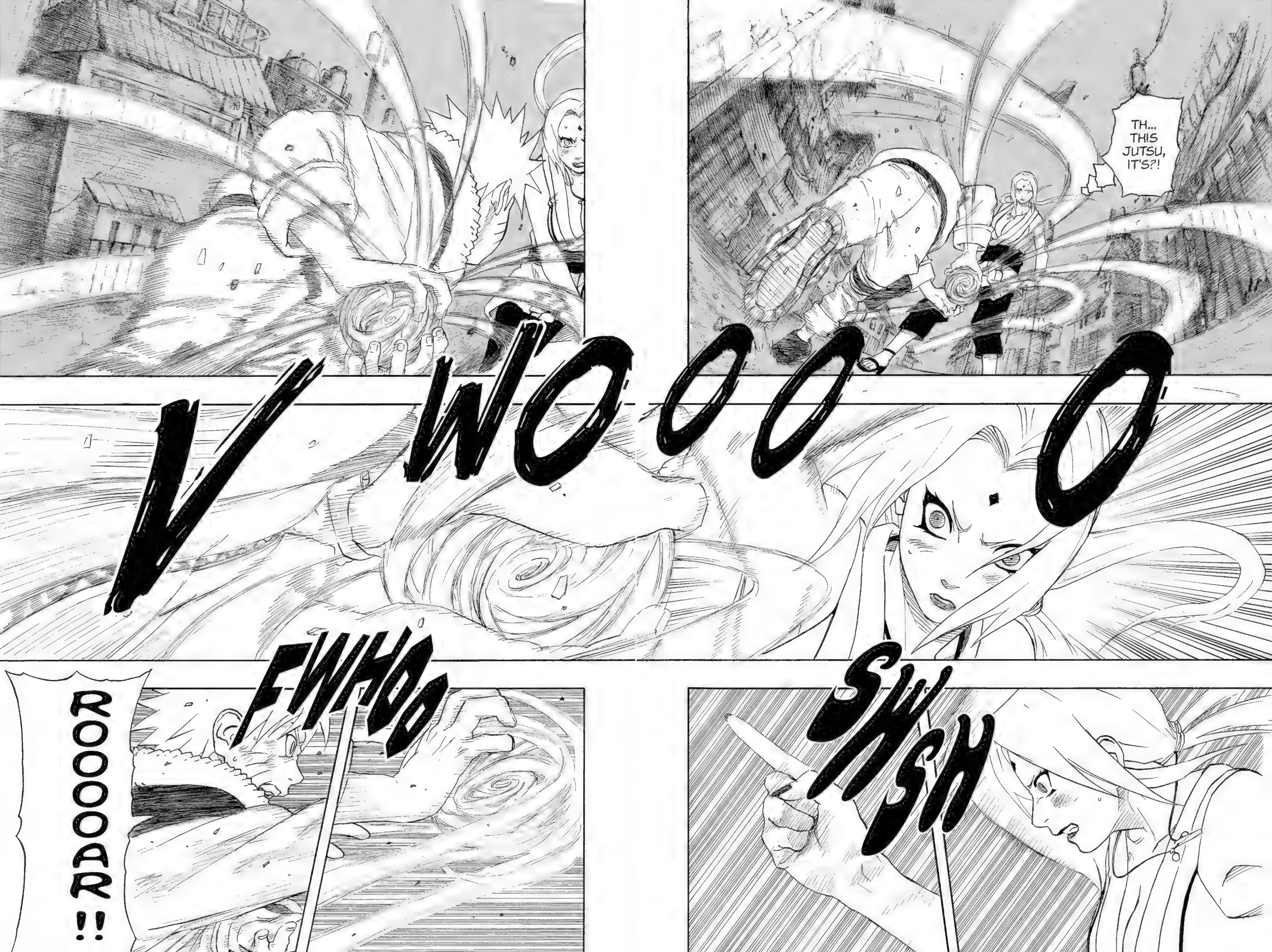
I HAD SOMEHOW HEARD THAT IT WAS AN ANIME VIDEO PRODUCED BY A JAPANESE ANIMATOR, BUT UNTIL I ACTUALLY WATCHED IT, IT DIDN'T QUITE HIT ME. BUT THEN, I WAS STRUCK WHEN I DID! I GOT SUCKED INTO IT SO MUCH THAT I PLAYED HOOKY FROM SCHOOL AND SAT AT HOME WATCHING IT ALL DAY. THE REASON WHY I GOT SO HOOKED WAS BECAUSE I HAD NEVER SEEN SUCH MIND-BLOWING IMAGES BEFORE! TO USE A MORE CURRENT REFERENCE, IT WAS AN IMPACT LIKE THE SLO-MO FLYING BULLET SEQUENCE IN *THE MATRIX*.

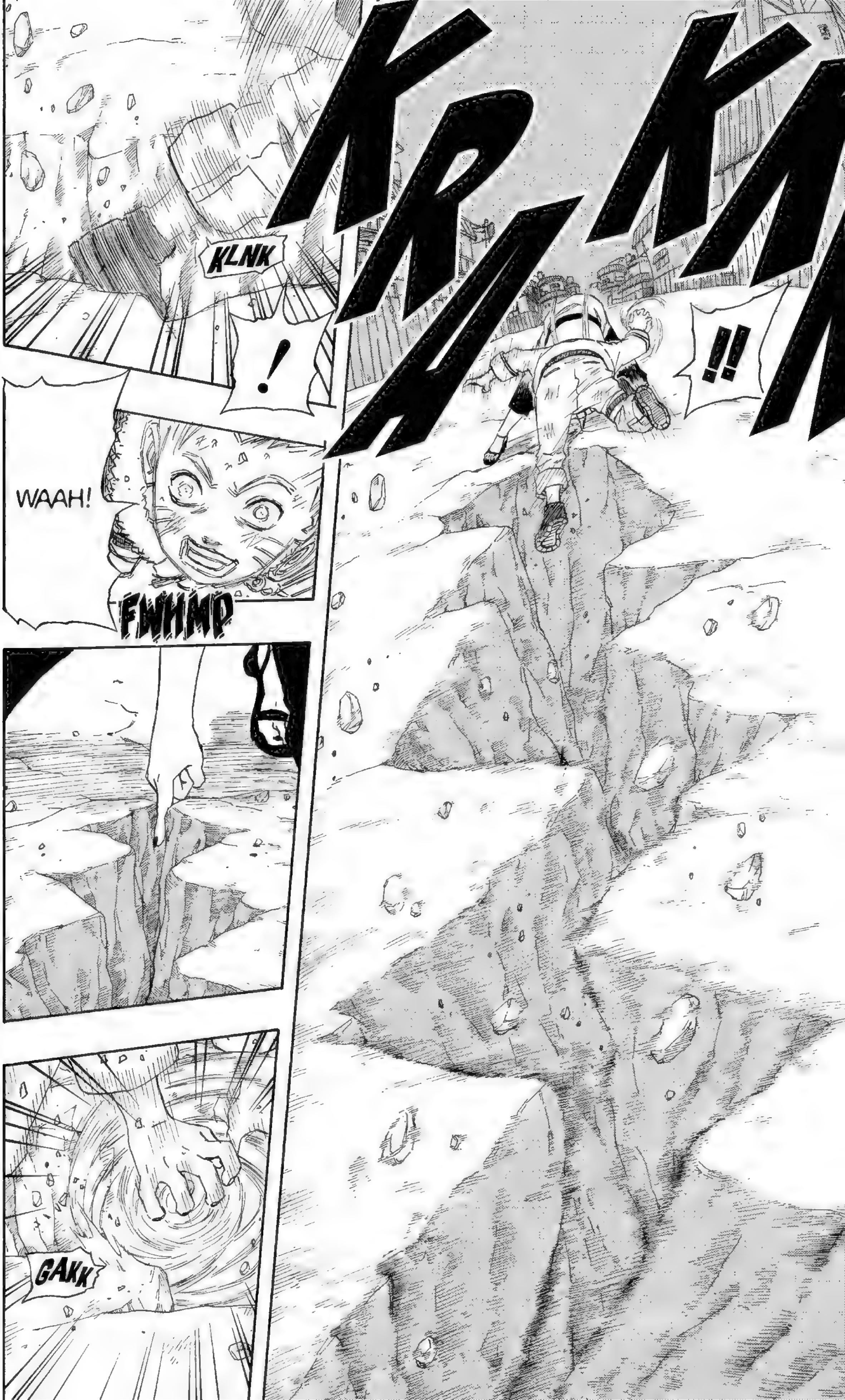
FIRST, EVEN THOUGH THE SUBJECT CHARACTERS AND PERSPECTIVE KEEP RAPIDLY CHANGING, THE BACKGROUND SHIFTS ACCORDINGLY AND IN SYNC. AND THE NARROW SENSE OF SPACE AND DEPTH WAS SO REALISTIC. AT FIRST I WONDERED, HOW DID HE DO THIS? BUT BECAUSE I KNEW HE COULDN'T HAVE DRAWN THE BACKGROUNDS BY HAND, I REALIZED THAT HE MUST HAVE DIGITALLY RENDERED IT USING A COMPUTER OR SOMETHING AND THEN ADDED THE BACKGROUNDS AS TEXTURE LAYERS...I HEARD THEY DID THAT WITH GAMES LIKE *VIRTUA FIGHTER 2*, TOO...SUCH WERE THE GEEKY CONVERSATIONS I WAS HAVING.

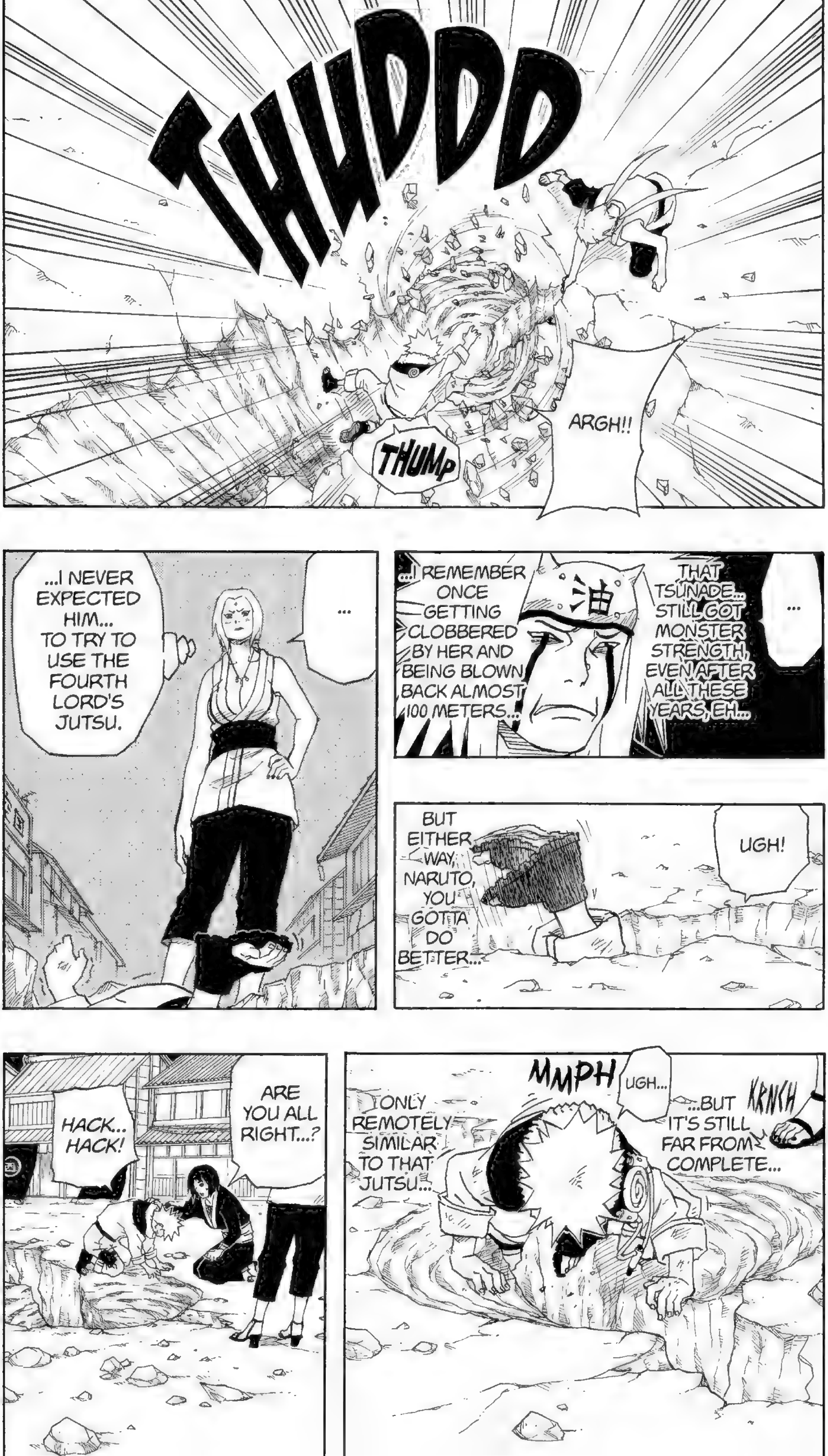
NOW THAT ANIME HAS ENTERED THE DIGITAL AGE AS WELL, SUCH MOVING BACKGROUNDS ARE NO LONGER NOVELTIES. IN FACT, THERE ARE WORKS NOW WHERE EVEN THE CHARACTERS ARE RENDERED FROM POLYGONS AND ONE NO LONGER HAS TO DRAW EACH CELL INDIVIDUALLY. JUST...WHEN ONE USES THE COMPUTER, THE LINES ARE TOO CLEAN... IT KIND OF LOSES A LITTLE OF THE ENERGY... OR EMOTIONAL IMPACT, SOMETHING LIKE THAT... I FEEL LIKE SOME OF THE NICE PARTS OF HAND DRAWING HAVE DISAPPEARED (ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF THE CHARACTERS).

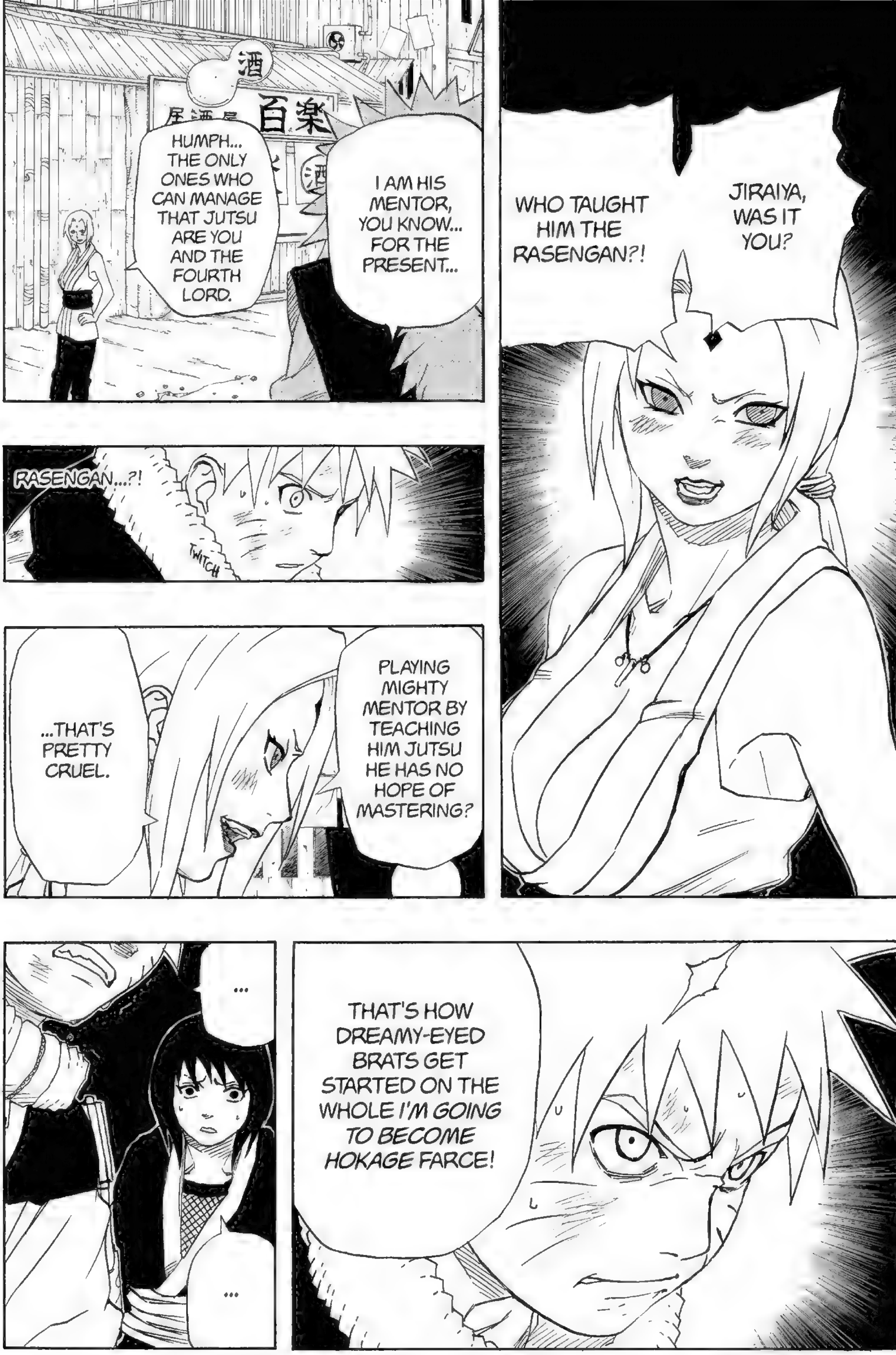
I WISH THIS FEEL-GOOD STUFF COULD BE EXPRESSED BY THE COMPUTER AS WELL; THAT WOULD MAKE THINGS PERFECT... IT SEEMS LIKE MANGA ARE ALSO GETTING MORE AND MORE DIGITIZED, BUT I WONDER IF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY STILL COSTS TOO MUCH TIME AND MONEY...?

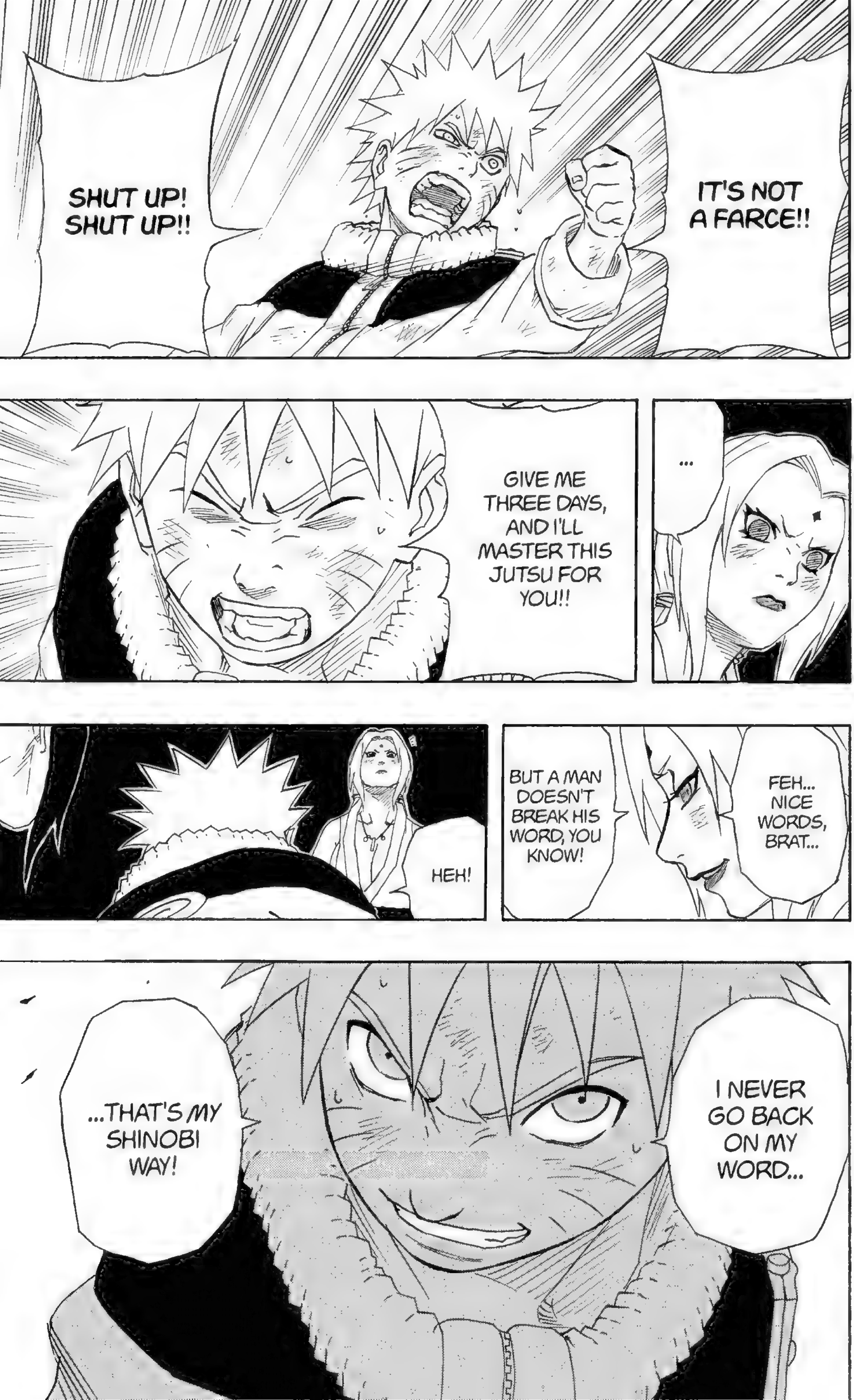
Number 159: The Wager...!!

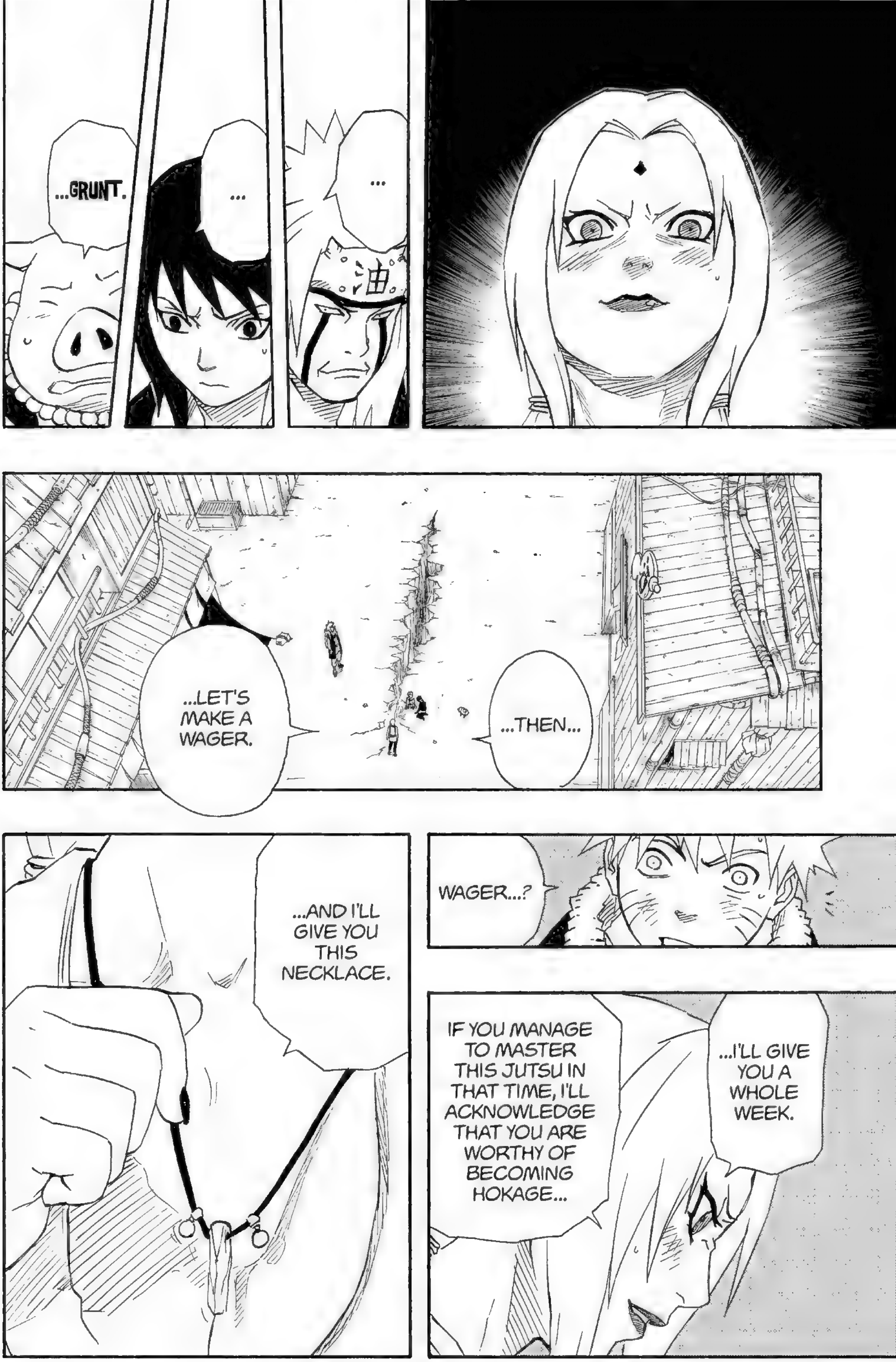

TH... THIS JUTSU, IT'S?!
VWOOOO
SHSH
FWHOO
ROOOOAR!!


KRAKA
!!
KLNK
!
WAAH!
FWHMP
GAKK

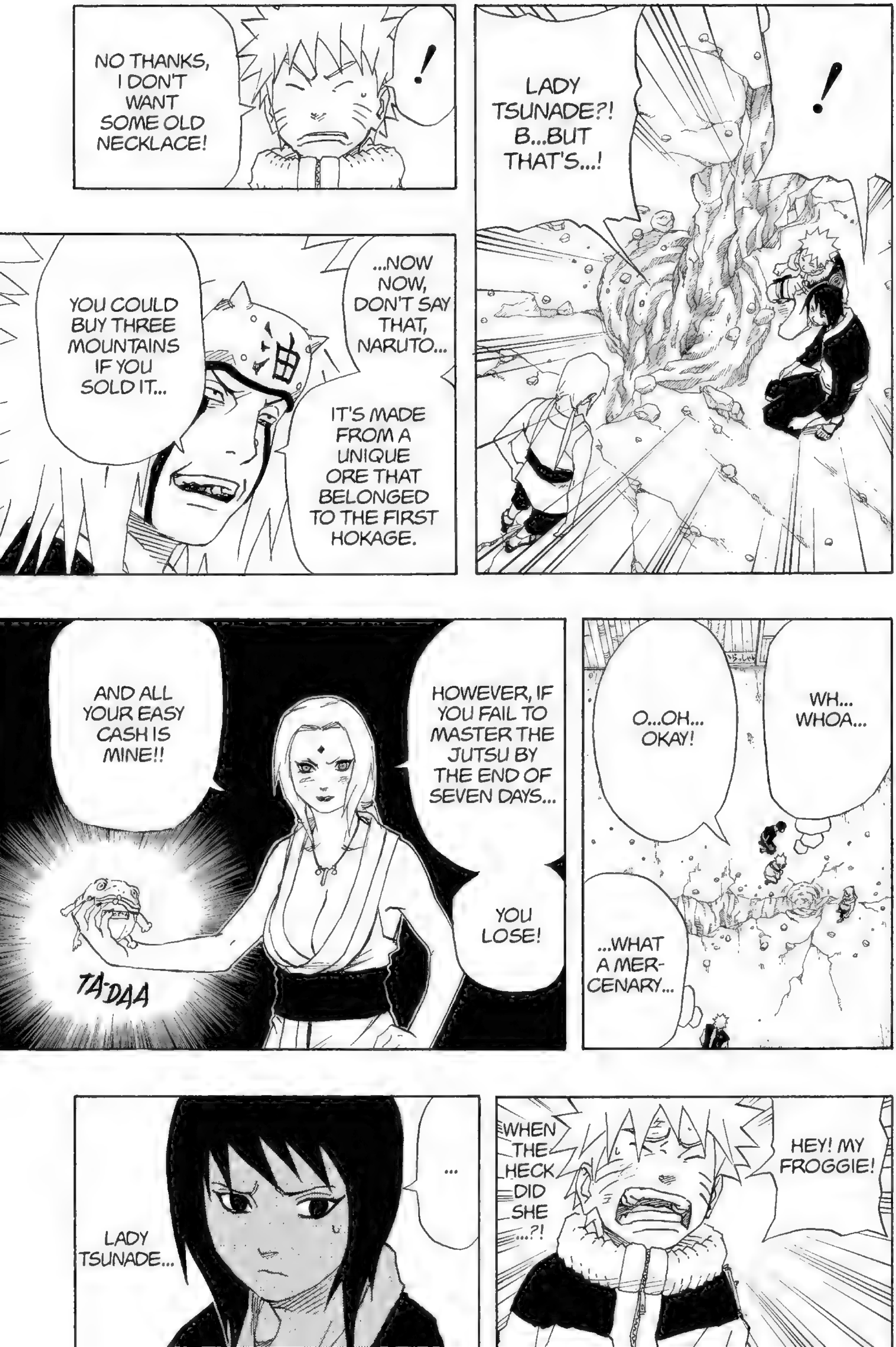

THUDDD
THUMP
ARGH!!
...I NEVER EXPECTED HIM... TO TRY TO USE THE FOURTH LORD'S JUTSU.
...
...I REMEMBER ONCE GETTING CLOBBERED BY HER AND BEING BLOWN BACK ALMOST 100 METERS...
THAT TSUNADE... STILL GOT MONSTER STRENGTH, EVEN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, EH...
...
BUT EITHER WAY, NARUTO, YOU GOTTA DO BETTER...
UGH!
HACK... HACK!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?
MMPH
UGH...
ONLY REMOTELY SIMILAR TO THAT JUTSU...
...BUT IT'S STILL FAR FROM COMPLETE...
KRNCH

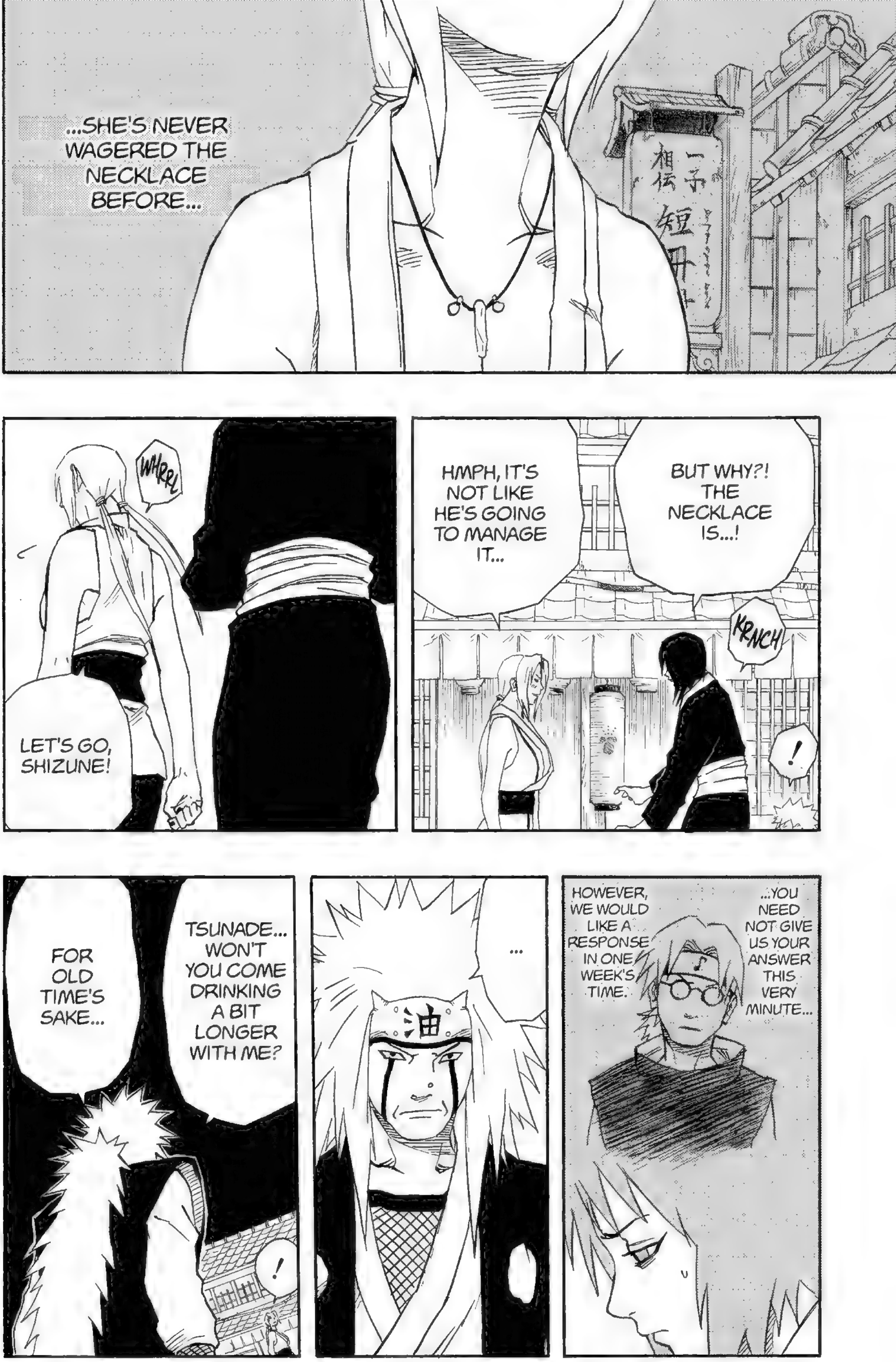

JIRAIYA, WAS IT YOU?
WHO TAUGHT HIM THE RASENGAN?!
I AM HIS MENTOR, YOU KNOW... FOR THE PRESENT...
HUMPH... THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN MANAGE THAT JUTSU ARE YOU AND THE FOURTH LORD.
酒
居酒屋 百楽
酒
RASENGAN...?!
TWITCH
PLAYING MIGHTY MENTOR BY TEACHING HIM JUTSU HE HAS NO HOPE OF MASTERING?
...THAT'S PRETTY CRUEL.
THAT'S HOW DREAMY-EYED BRATS GET STARTED ON THE WHOLE *I'M GOING TO BECOME HOKAGE* FARCE!
...
...


IT'S NOT A FARCE!!
SHUT UP! SHUT UP!!
...
GIVE ME THREE DAYS, AND I'LL MASTER THIS JUTSU FOR YOU!!
FEH... NICE WORDS, BRAT...
BUT A MAN DOESN'T BREAK HIS WORD, YOU KNOW!
HEH!
I NEVER GO BACK ON MY WORD...
...THAT'S MY SHINOBI WAY!

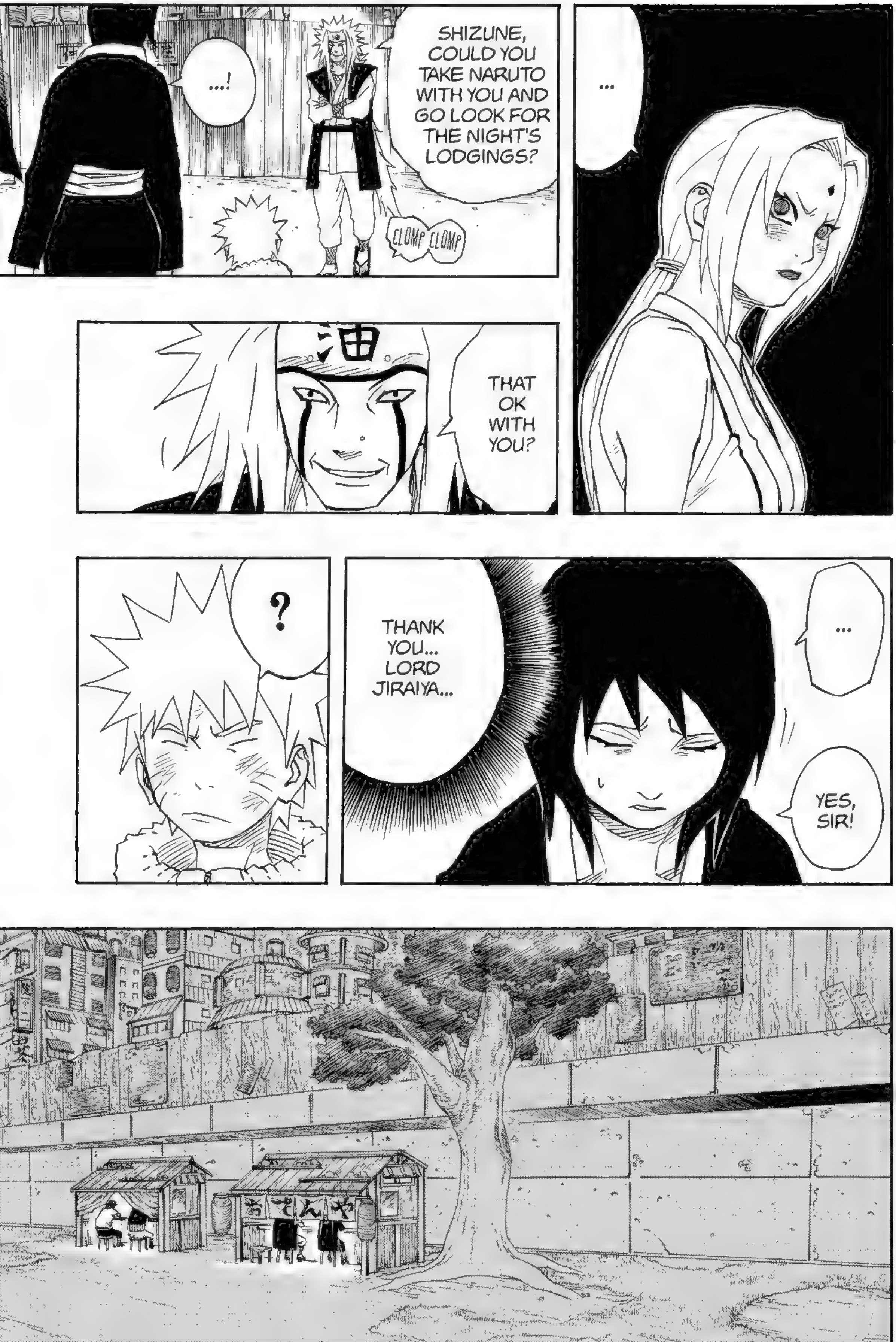

...
...
...GRUNT.
...THEN...
...LET'S MAKE A WAGER.
WAGER...?
...I'LL GIVE YOU A WHOLE WEEK.
IF YOU MANAGE TO MASTER THIS JUTSU IN THAT TIME, I'LL ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU ARE WORTHY OF BECOMING HOKAGE...
...AND I'LL GIVE YOU THIS NECKLACE.

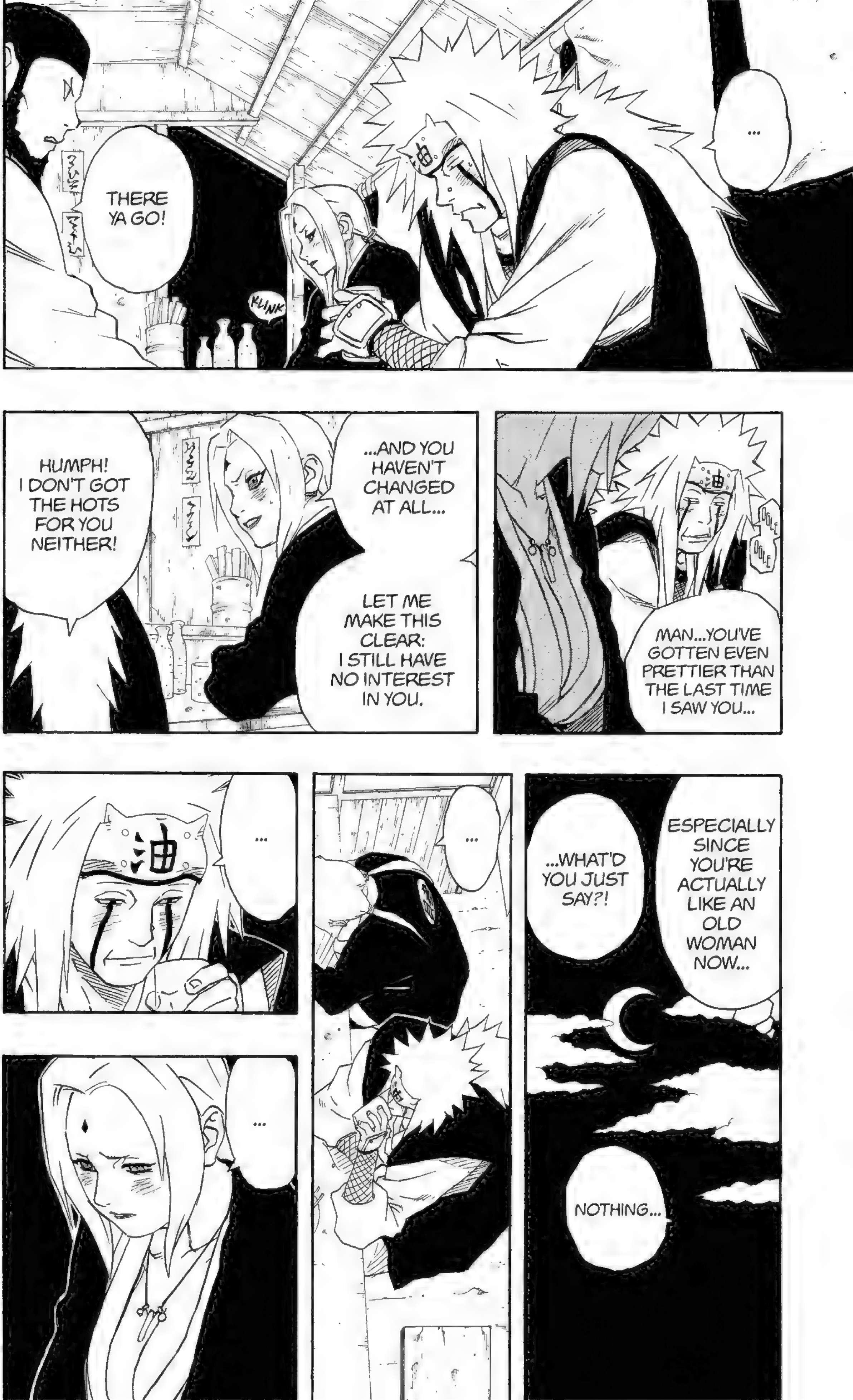
READ THIS WAY


!
LADY TSUNADE?! B...BUT THAT'S...!
!
NO THANKS, I DON'T WANT SOME OLD NECKLACE!
...NOW NOW, DON'T SAY THAT, NARUTO...
IT'S MADE FROM A UNIQUE ORE THAT BELONGED TO THE FIRST HOKAGE.
YOU COULD BUY THREE MOUNTAINS IF YOU SOLD IT...
WH... WHOA...
O...OH... OKAY!
...WHAT A MERCENARY...
HOWEVER, IF YOU FAIL TO MASTER THE JUTSU BY THE END OF SEVEN DAYS...
YOU LOSE!
AND ALL YOUR EASY CASH IS MINE!!
TA-DAA
HEY! MY FROGGIE!
WHEN THE HECK DID SHE ...?!
...
LADY TSUNADE...

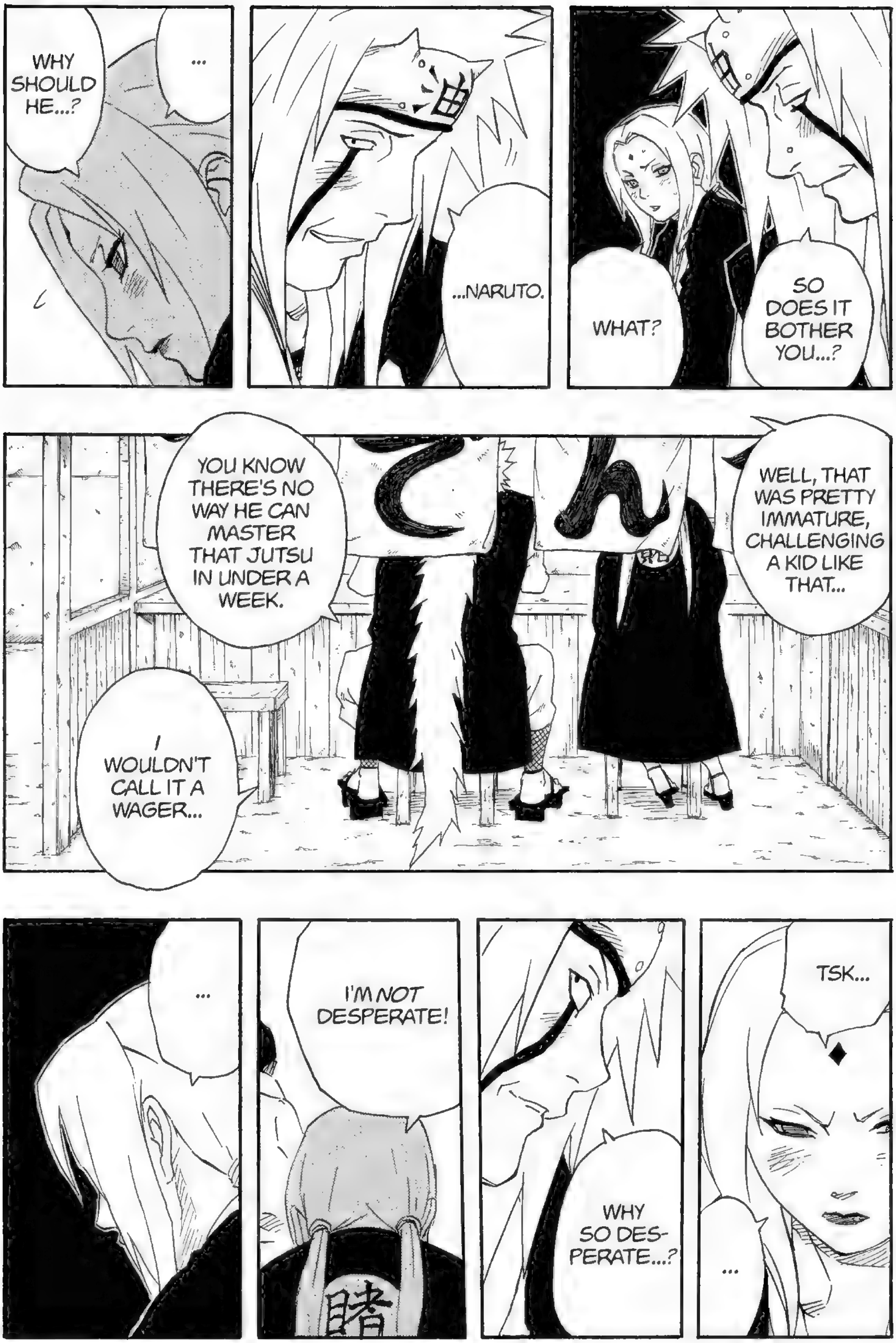

...SHE'S NEVER WAGERED THE NECKLACE BEFORE...
BUT WHY?! THE NECKLACE IS...!
HMPH, IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S GOING TO MANAGE IT...
KRNCH
!
WHRRL
LET'S GO, SHIZUNE!
...YOU NEED NOT GIVE US YOUR ANSWER THIS VERY MINUTE...
HOWEVER, WE WOULD LIKE A RESPONSE IN ONE WEEK'S TIME.
...
TSUNADE... WON'T YOU COME DRINKING A BIT LONGER WITH ME?
FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE...
!

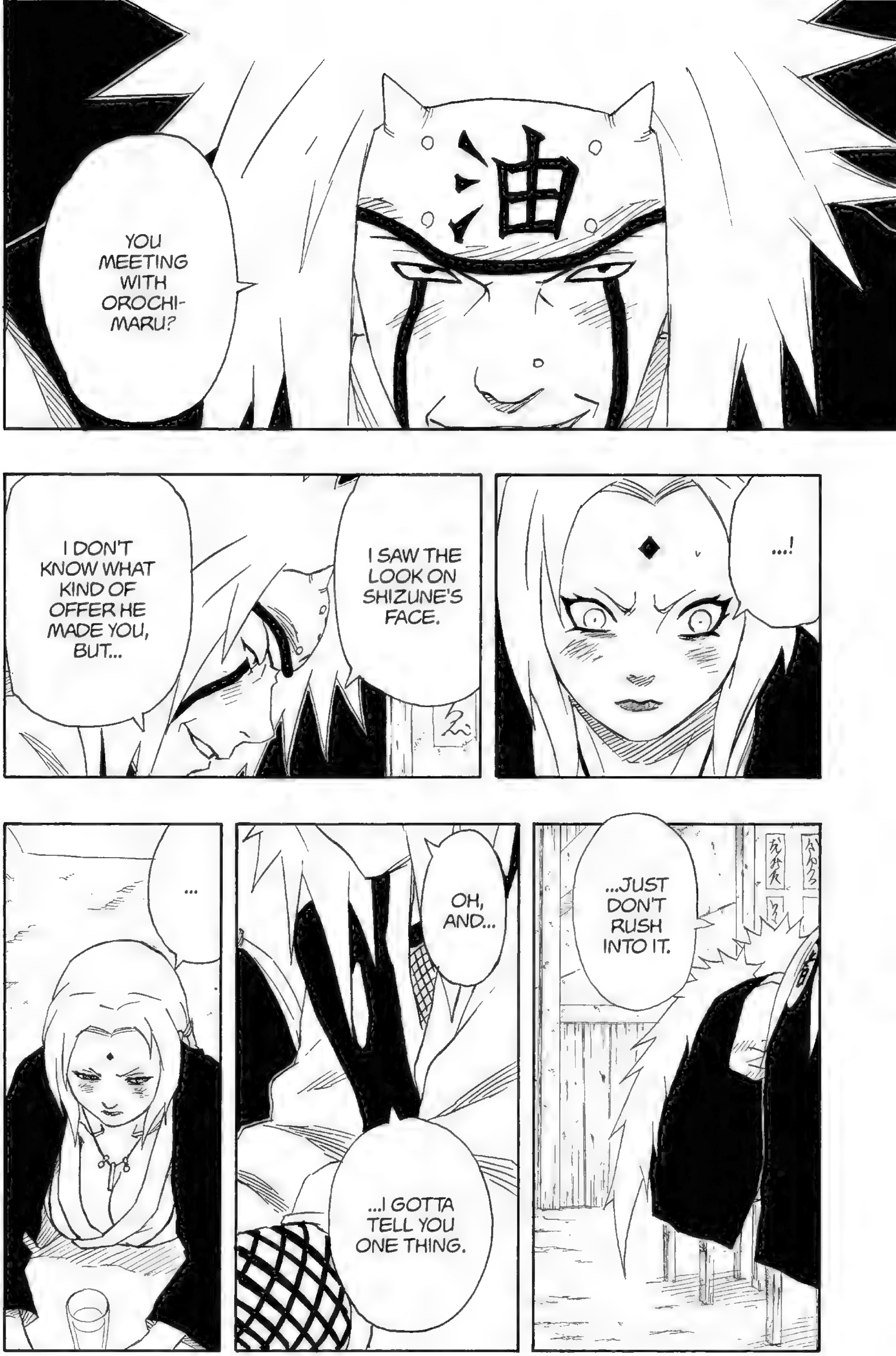
READ THIS WAY

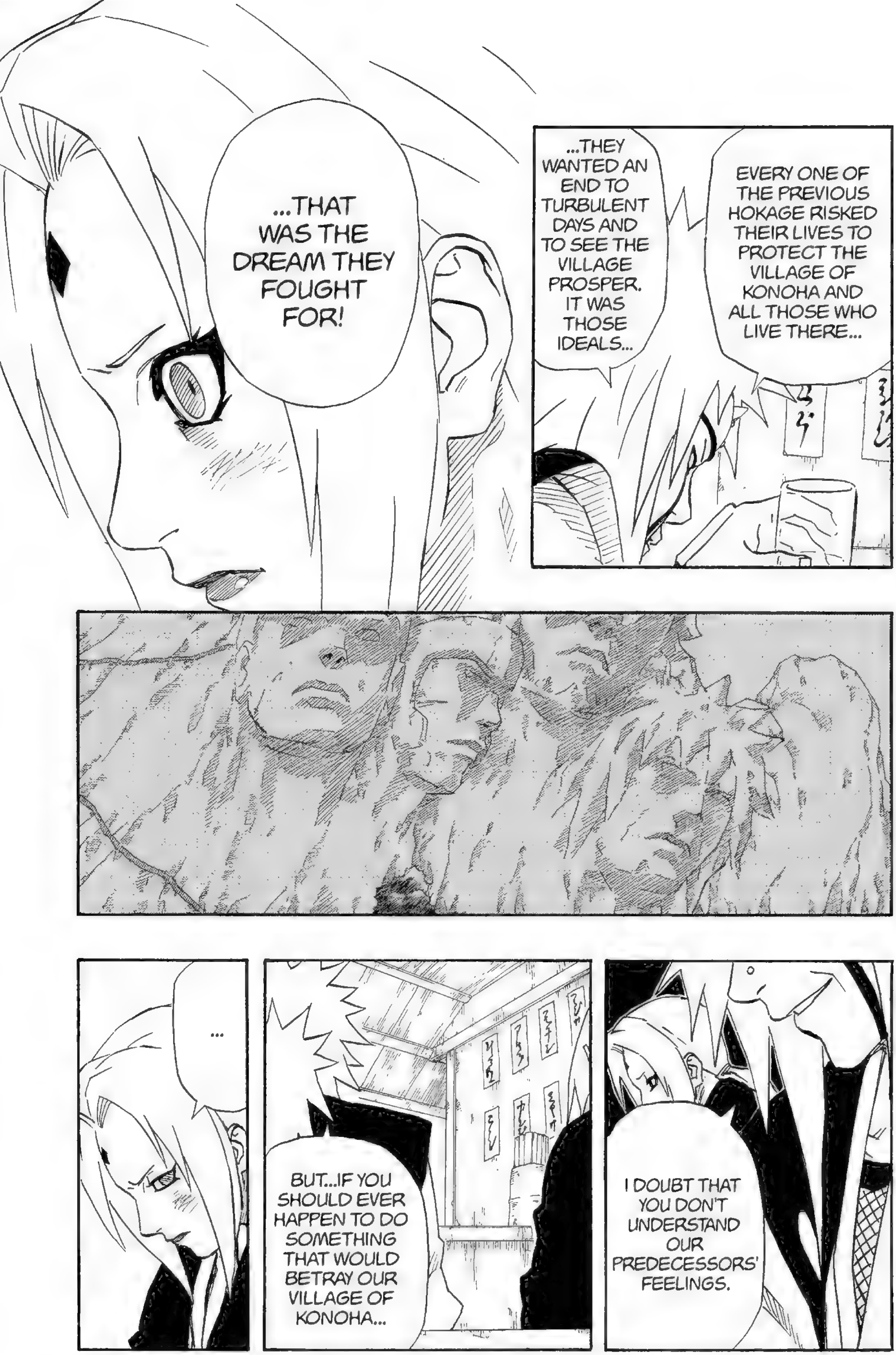

...
SHIZUNE, COULD YOU TAKE NARUTO WITH YOU AND GO LOOK FOR THE NIGHT'S LODGINGS?
...!
CLOMP CLOMP
THAT OK WITH YOU?
...
YES, SIR!
THANK YOU... LORD JIRAIYA...
?

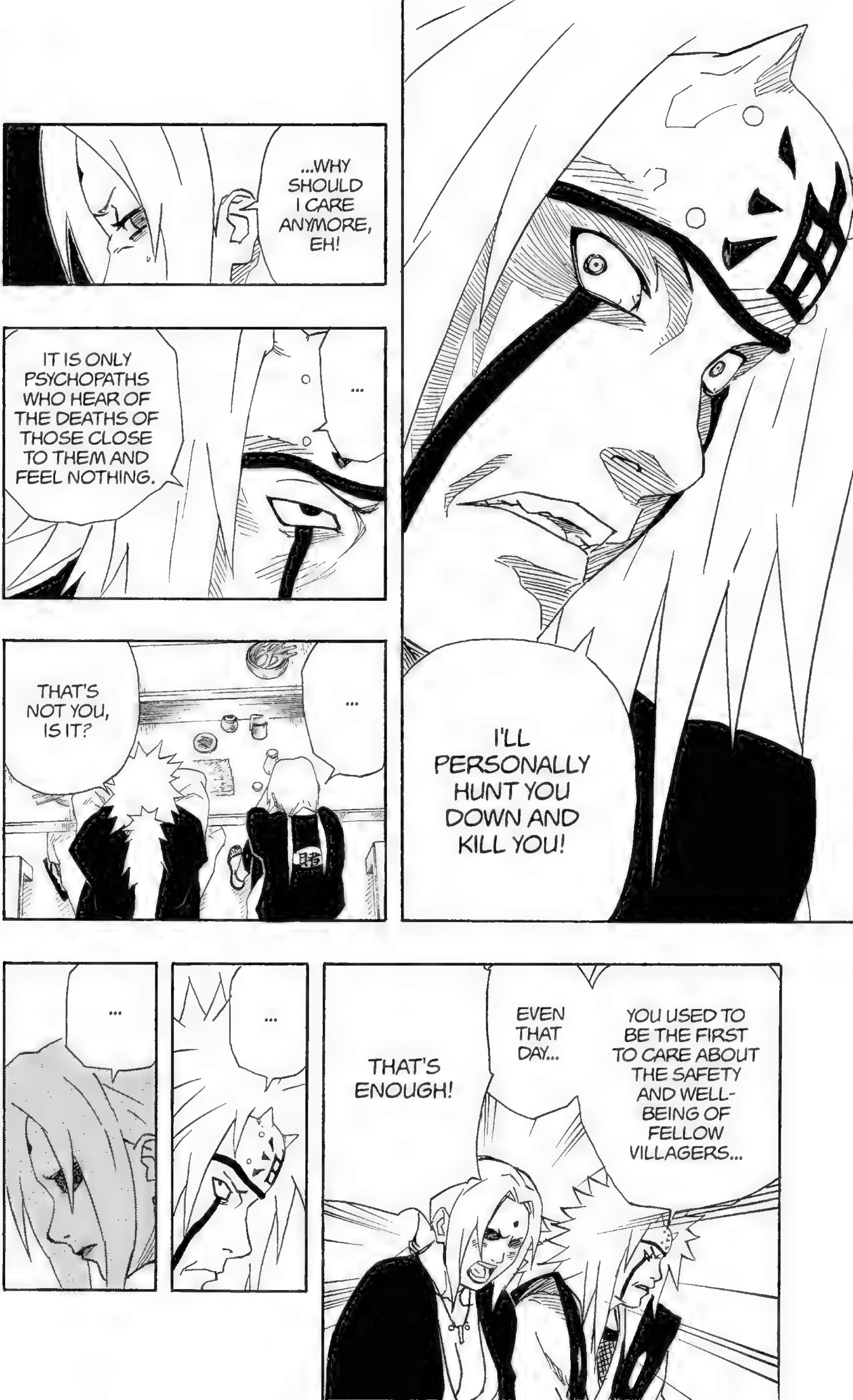

...
THERE YA GO!
KLINK
OGLE OGLE
MAN...YOU'VE GOTTEN EVEN PRETTIER THAN THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU...
...AND YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL...
LET ME MAKE THIS CLEAR: I STILL HAVE NO INTEREST IN YOU.
HUMPH! I DON'T GOT THE HOTS FOR YOU NEITHER!
ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU'RE ACTUALLY LIKE AN OLD WOMAN NOW...
...WHAT'D YOU JUST SAY?!
NOTHING...
...
...
...

READ THIS WAY

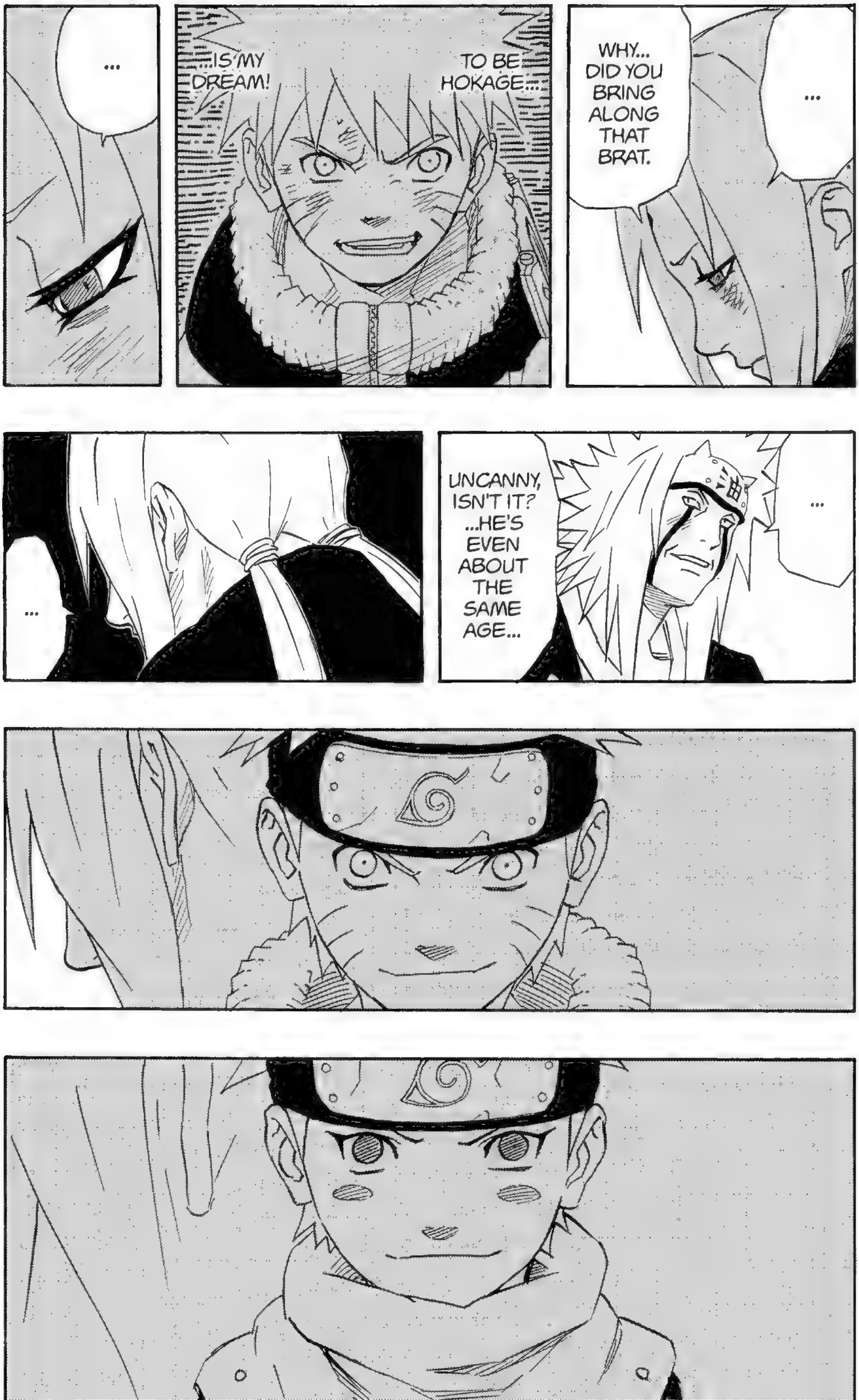

SO DOES IT BOTHER YOU...?
WHAT?
...NARUTO.
...
WHY SHOULD HE...?
WELL, THAT WAS PRETTY IMMATURE, CHALLENGING A KID LIKE THAT...
YOU KNOW THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN MASTER THAT JUTSU IN UNDER A WEEK.
I WOULDN'T CALL IT A WAGER...
TSK...
...
WHY SO DESPERATE...?
I'M NOT DESPERATE!
賭
...

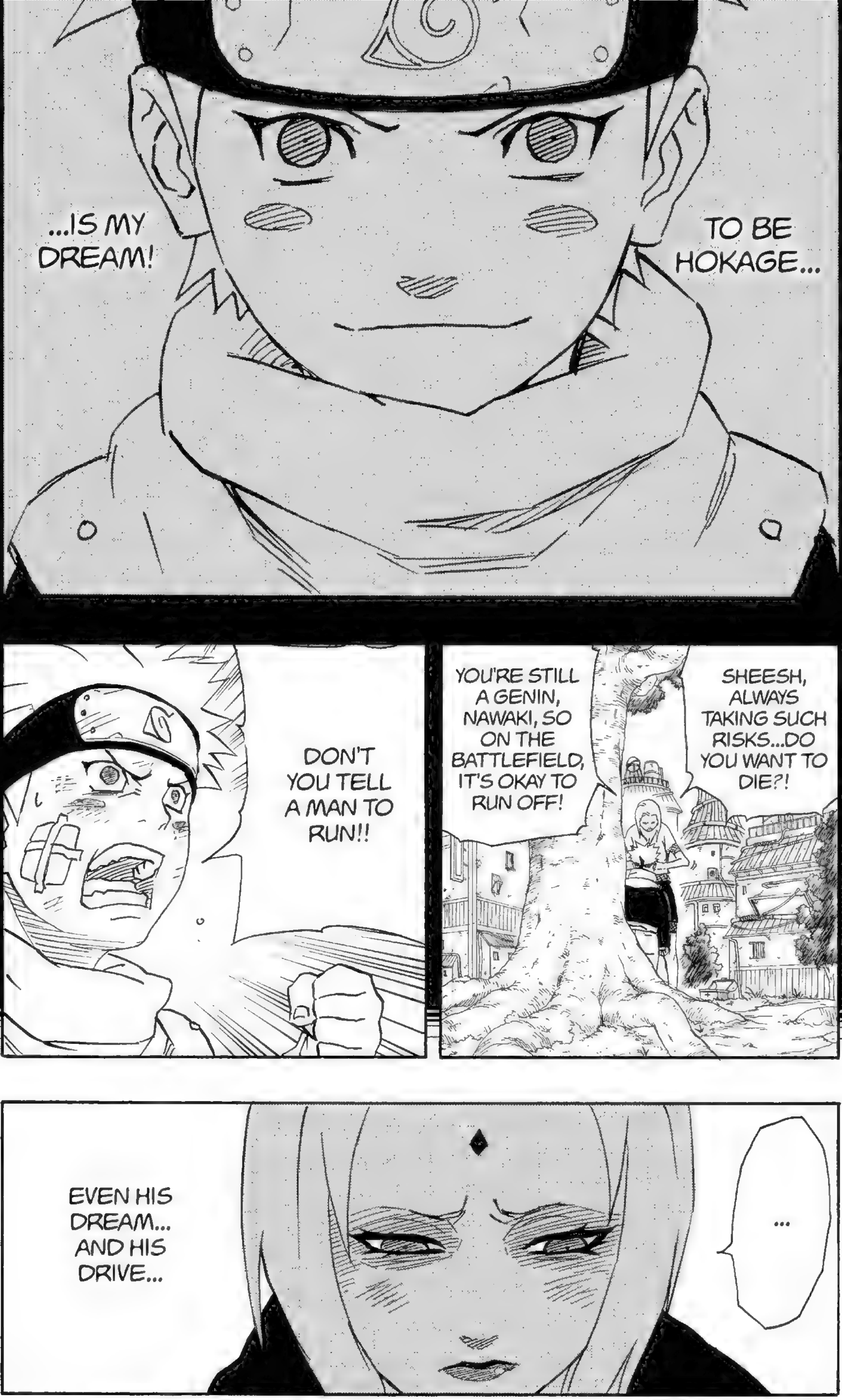

YOU MEETING WITH OROCHIMARU?
...!
I SAW THE LOOK ON SHIZUNE'S FACE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF OFFER HE MADE YOU, BUT...
...JUST DON'T RUSH INTO IT.
OH, AND...
...I GOTTA TELL YOU ONE THING.
...

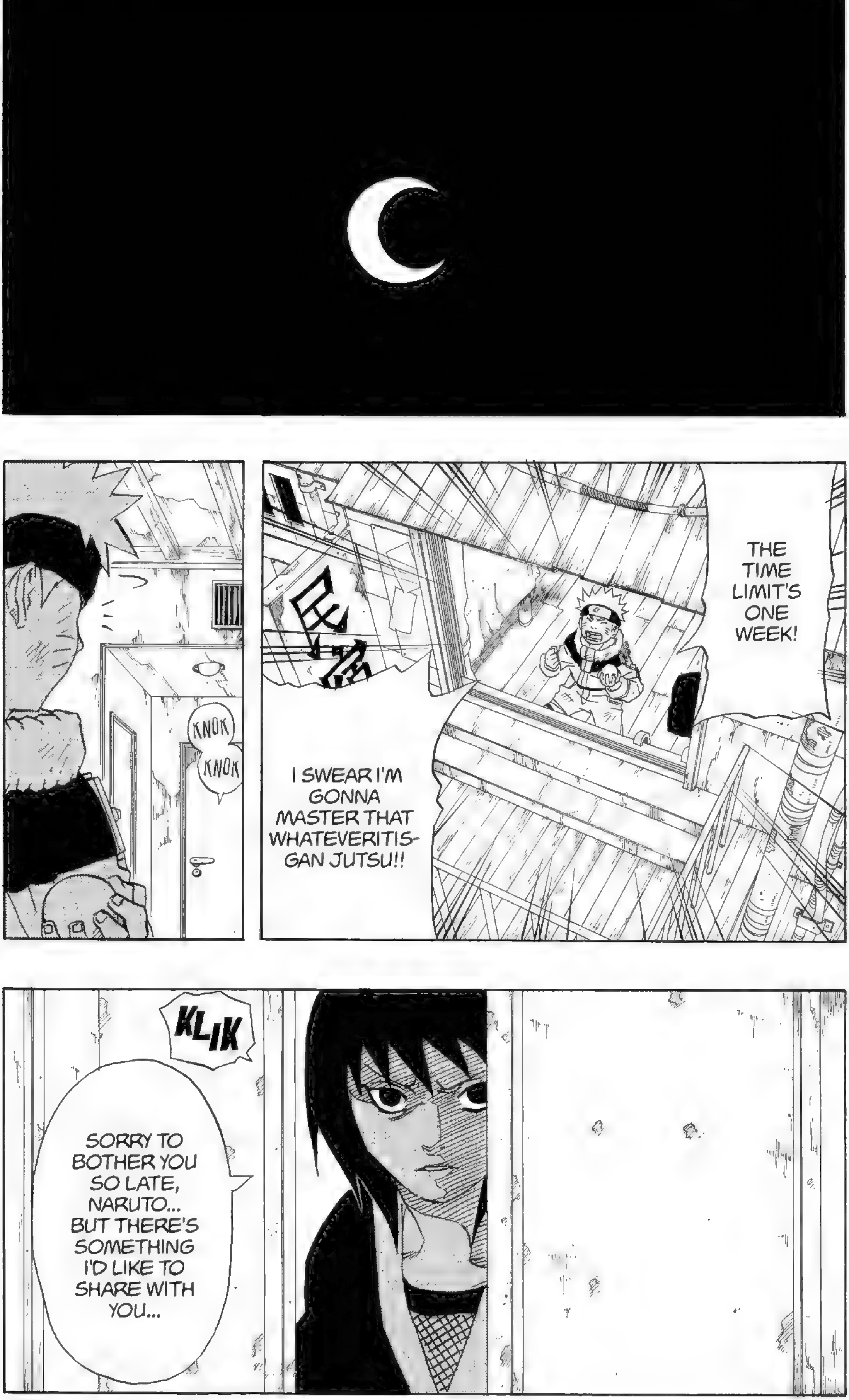

EVERY ONE OF THE PREVIOUS HOKAGE RISKED THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT THE VILLAGE OF KONOHA AND ALL THOSE WHO LIVE THERE...
...THEY WANTED AN END TO TURBULENT DAYS AND TO SEE THE VILLAGE PROSPER. IT WAS THOSE IDEALS...
...THAT WAS THE DREAM THEY FOUGHT FOR!
I DOUBT THAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND OUR PREDECESSORS' FEELINGS.
BUT...IF YOU SHOULD EVER HAPPEN TO DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD BETRAY OUR VILLAGE OF KONOHA...
...

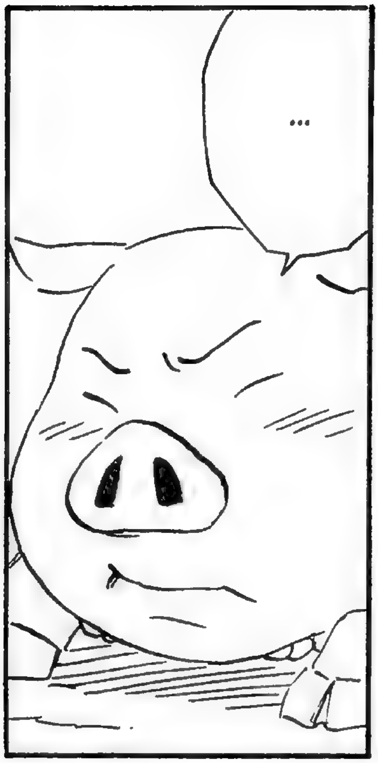

I'LL PERSONALLY HUNT YOU DOWN AND KILL YOU!
...WHY SHOULD I CARE ANYMORE, EH!
...
IT IS ONLY PSYCHOPATHS WHO HEAR OF THE DEATHS OF THOSE CLOSE TO THEM AND FEEL NOTHING.
...
THAT'S NOT YOU, IS IT?
YOU USED TO BE THE FIRST TO CARE ABOUT THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF FELLOW VILLAGERS...
EVEN THAT DAY...
THAT'S ENOUGH!
...
...

READ THIS WAY


...
WHY... DID YOU BRING ALONG THAT BRAT.
TO BE HOKAGE...
...IS MY DREAM!
...
...
UNCANNY, ISN'T IT? ...HE'S EVEN ABOUT THE SAME AGE...
...

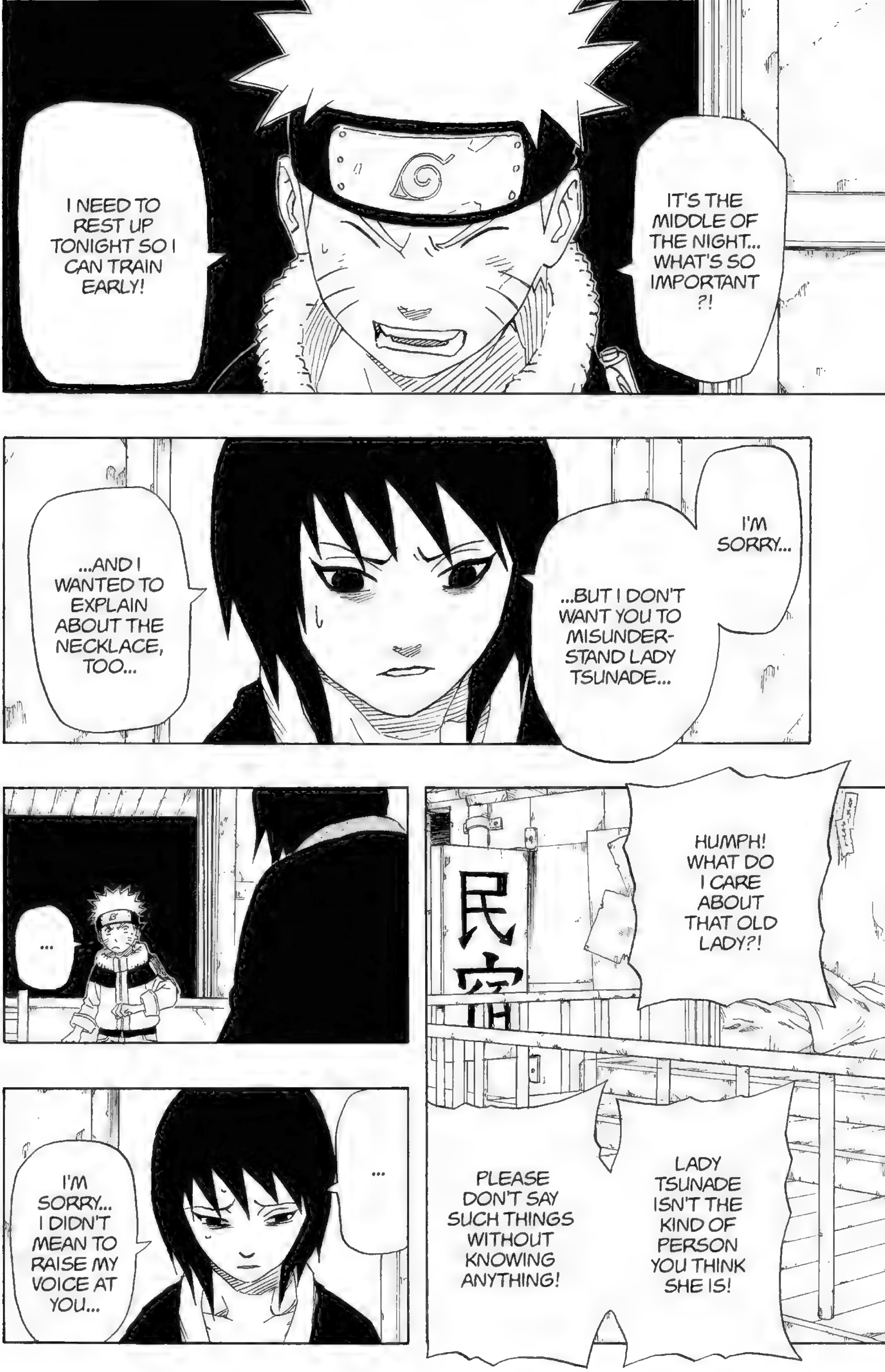

TO BE HOKAGE...
...IS MY DREAM!
SHEESH, ALWAYS TAKING SUCH RISKS...DO YOU WANT TO DIE?!
YOU'RE STILL A GENIN, NAWAKI, SO ON THE BATTLEFIELD, IT'S OKAY TO RUN OFF!
DON'T YOU TELL A MAN TO RUN!!
...
EVEN HIS DREAM... AND HIS DRIVE...


THE TIME LIMIT'S ONE WEEK!
I SWEAR I'M GONNA MASTER THAT WHATEVERITIS-GAN JUTSU!!
KNOK
KNOK
KLIK
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU SO LATE, NARUTO... BUT THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU...

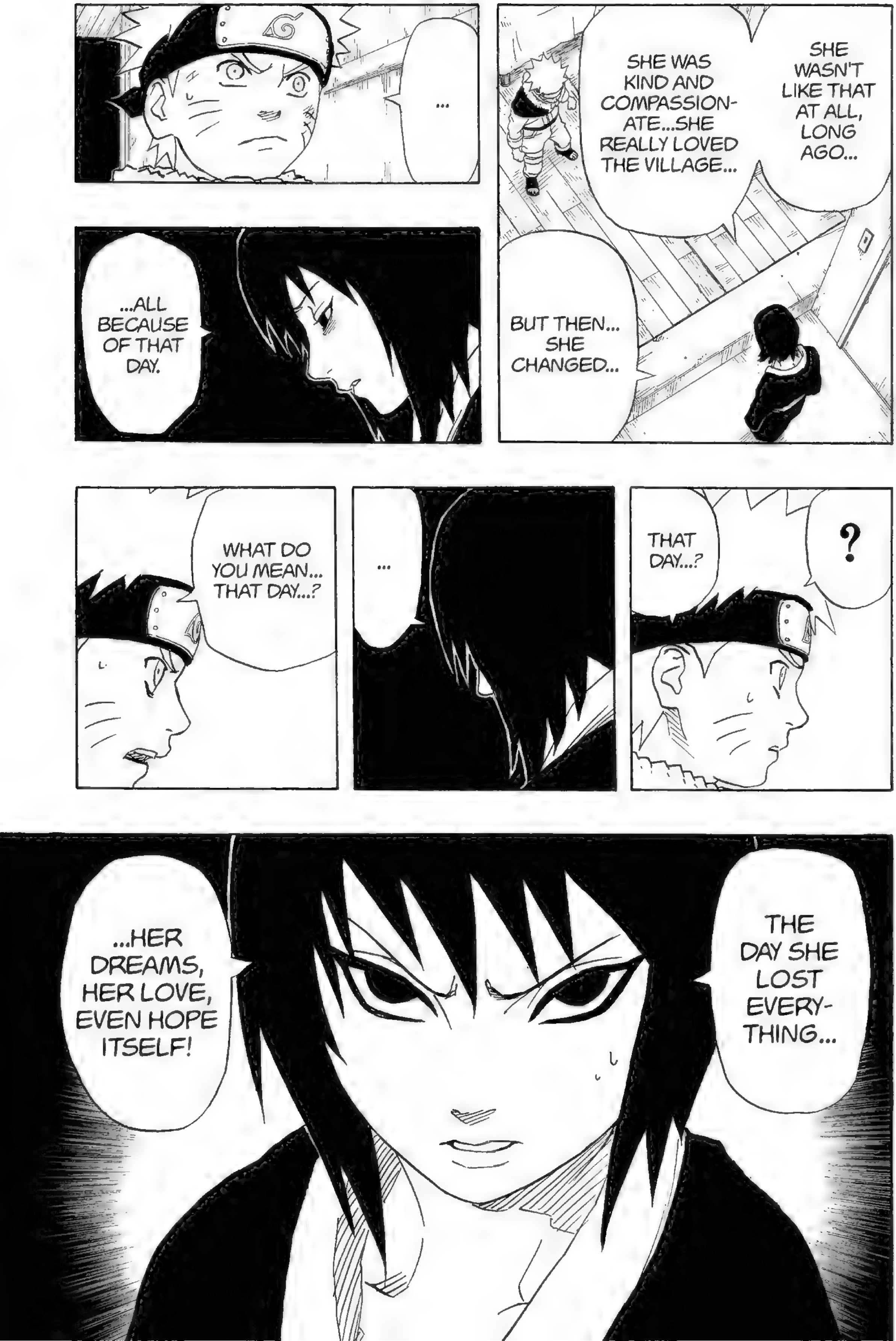


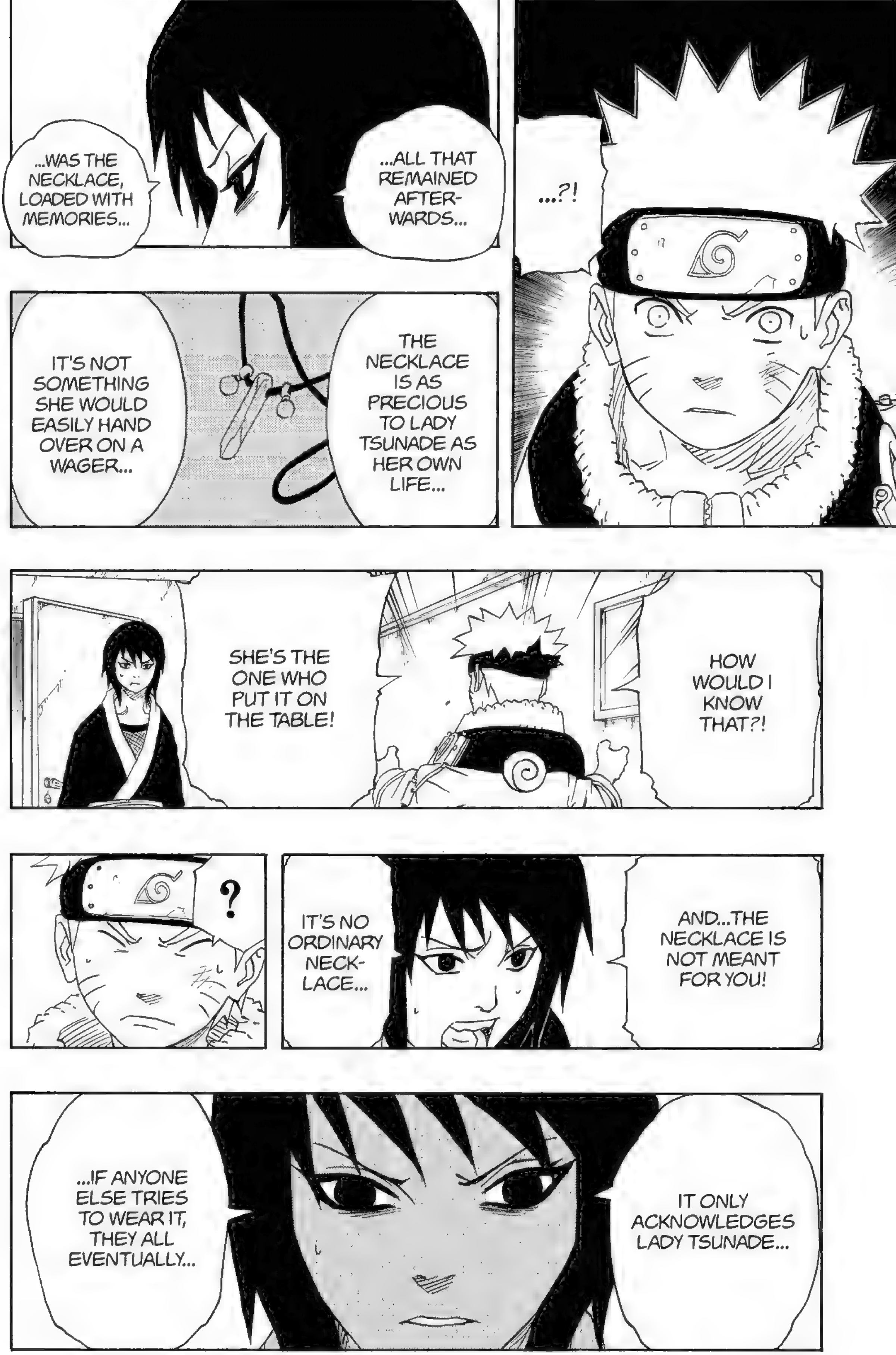
Number 160:

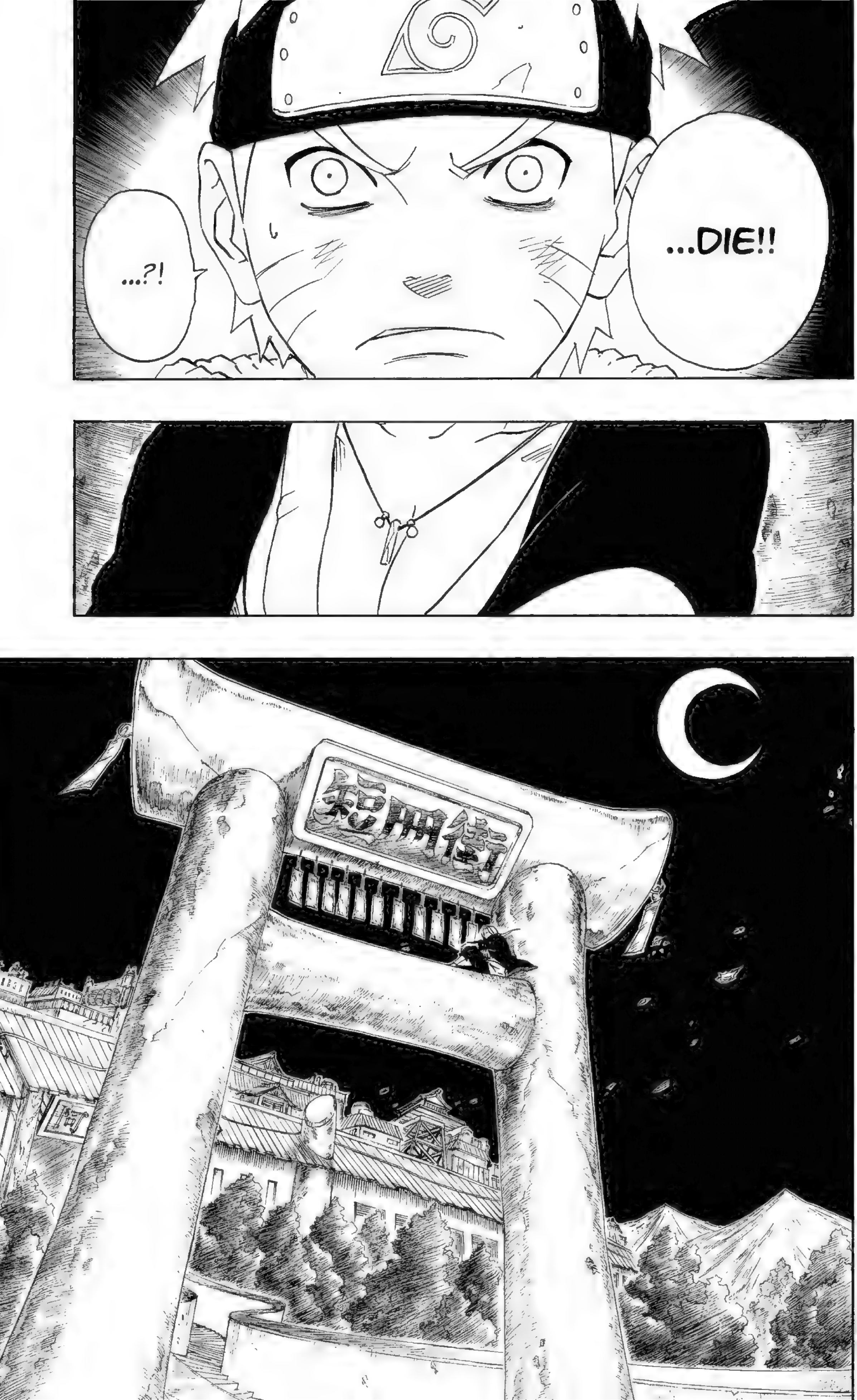
The Necklace of Death...!!

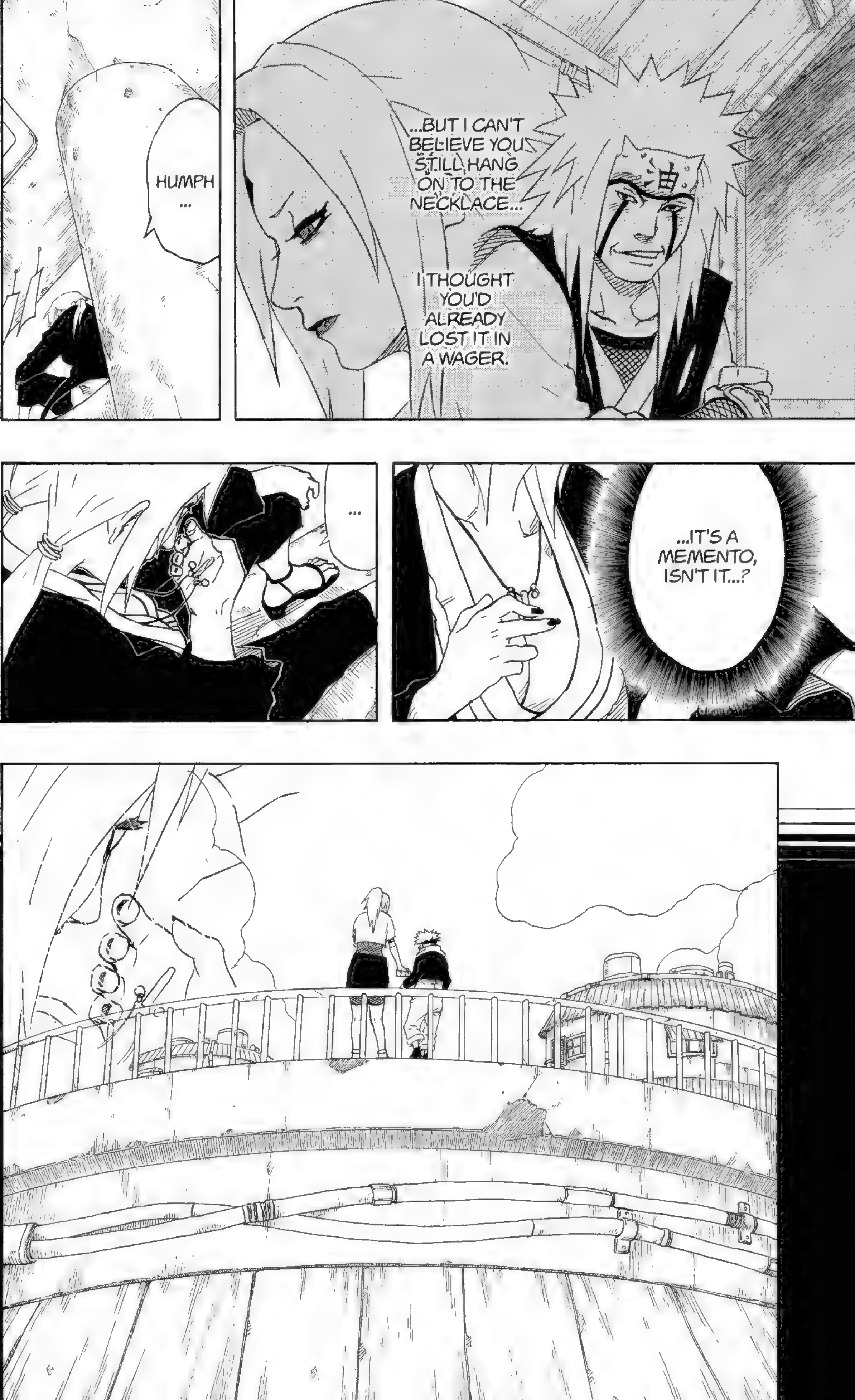

IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT... WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ?!
I NEED TO REST UP TONIGHT SO I CAN TRAIN EARLY!
I'M SORRY...
...BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO MISUNDERSTAND LADY TSUNADE...
...AND I WANTED TO EXPLAIN ABOUT THE NECKLACE, TOO...
HUMPH! WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT THAT OLD LADY?!
民
LADY TSUNADE ISN'T THE KIND OF PERSON YOU THINK SHE IS!
PLEASE DON'T SAY SUCH THINGS WITHOUT KNOWING ANYTHING!
...
...
I'M SORRY... I DIDN'T MEAN TO RAISE MY VOICE AT YOU...

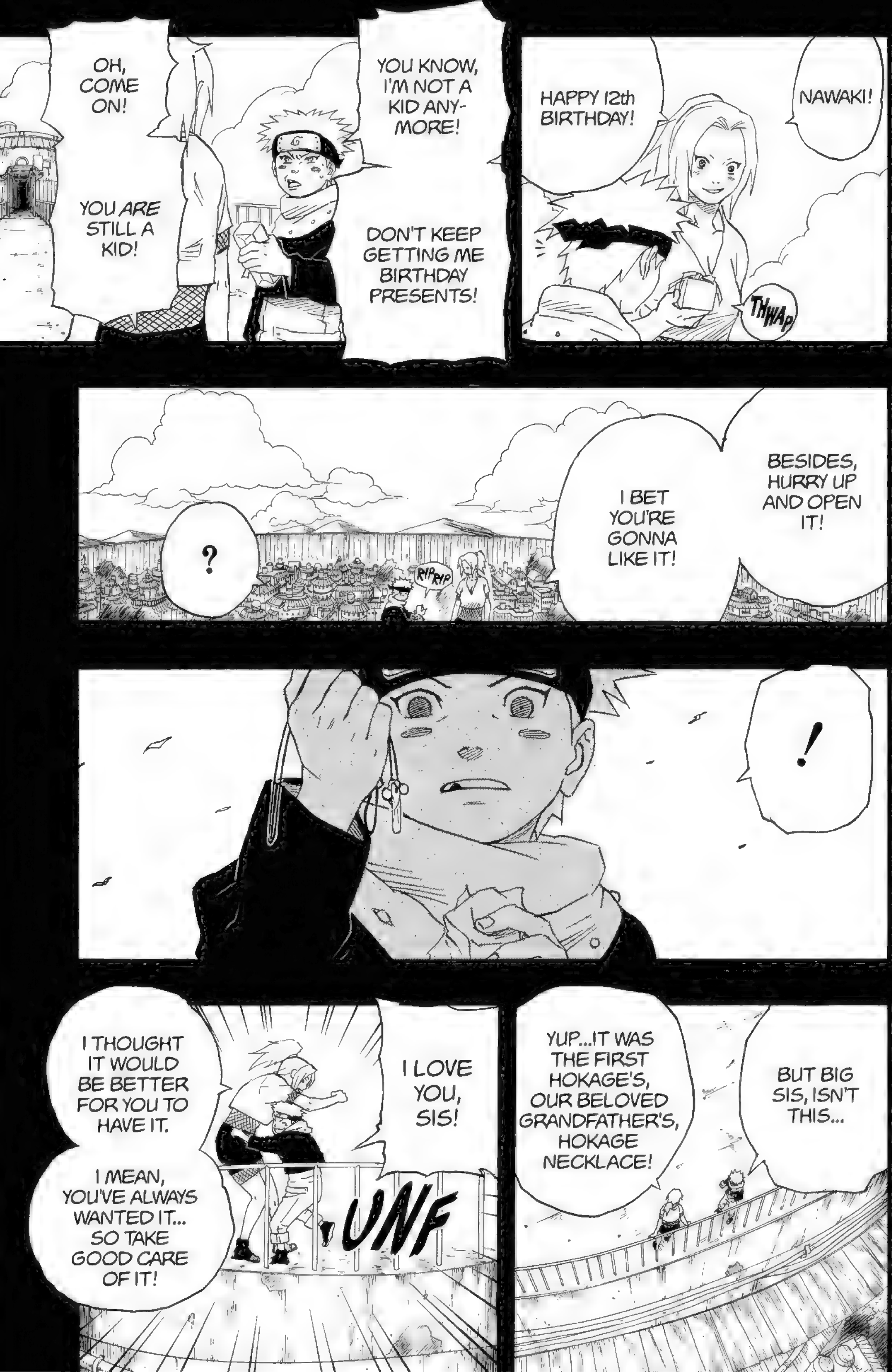
READ THIS WAY

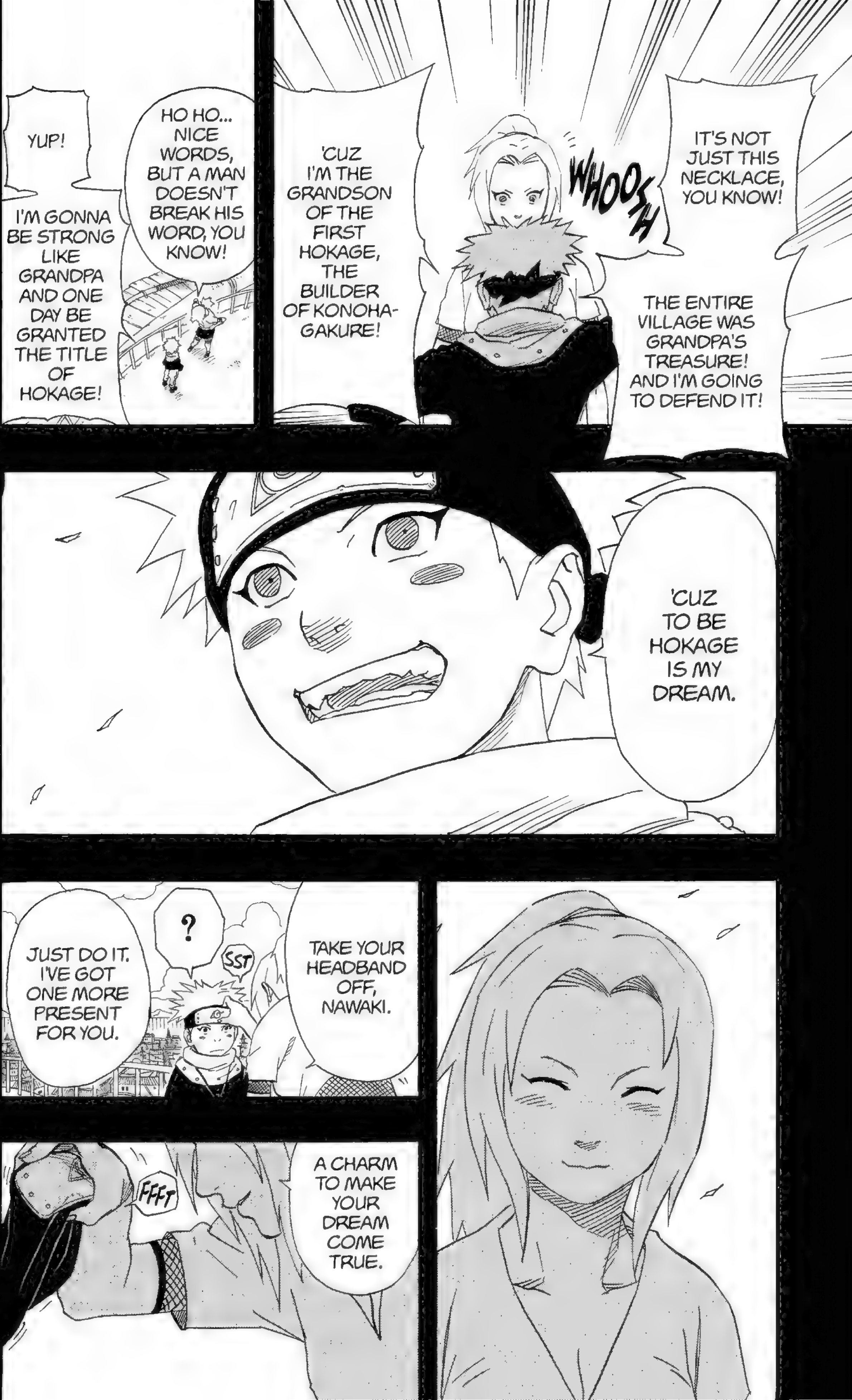

SHE WASN'T LIKE THAT AT ALL, LONG AGO...
SHE WAS KIND AND COMPASSIONATE...SHE REALLY LOVED THE VILLAGE...
BUT THEN... SHE CHANGED...
...
...ALL BECAUSE OF THAT DAY.
?
THAT DAY...?
...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN... THAT DAY...?
THE DAY SHE LOST EVERYTHING...
...HER DREAMS, HER LOVE, EVEN HOPE ITSELF!

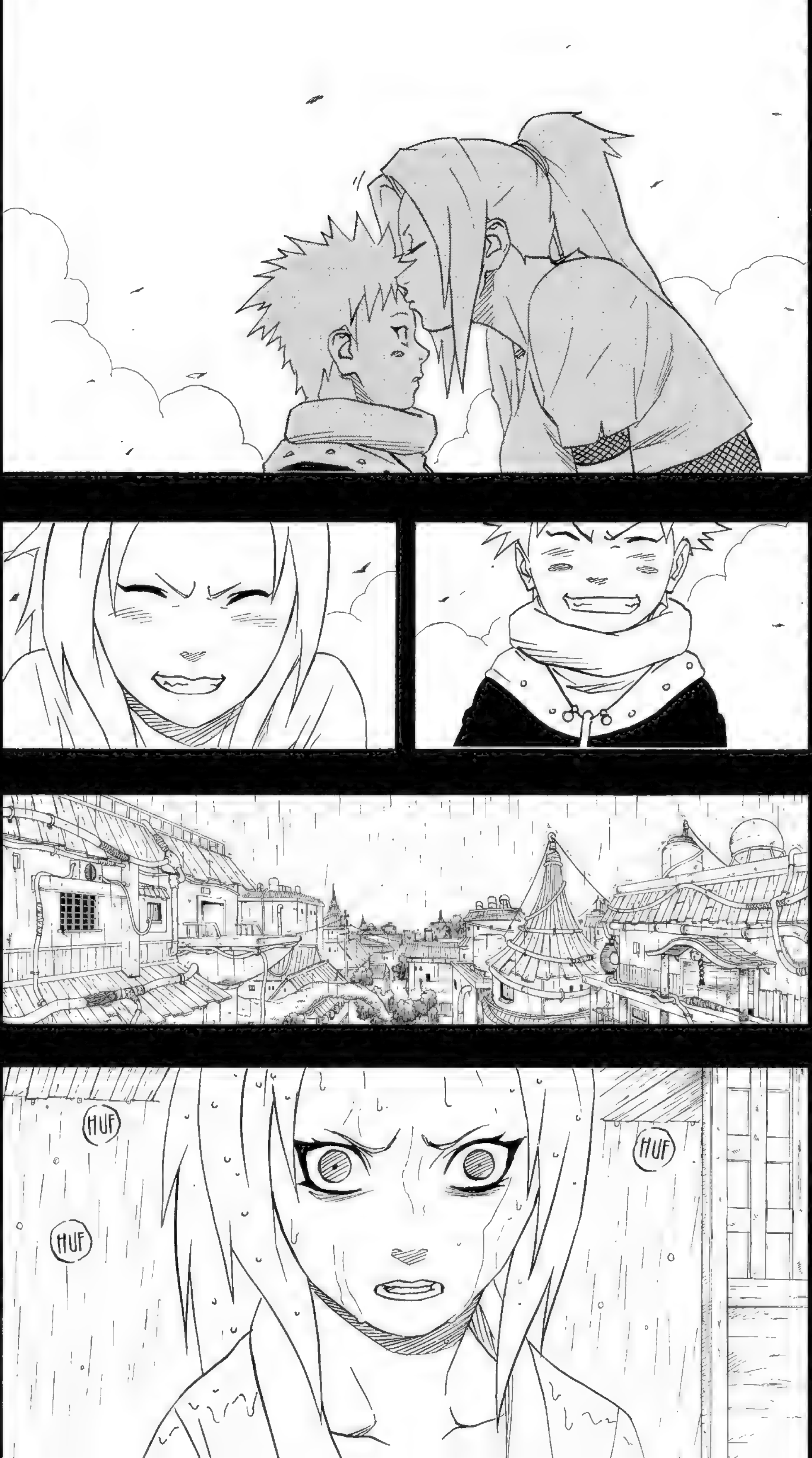

...ALL THAT REMAINED AFTER-WARDS...
...WAS THE NECKLACE, LOADED WITH MEMORIES...
THE NECKLACE IS AS PRECIOUS TO LADY TSUNADE AS HER OWN LIFE...
IT'S NOT SOMETHING SHE WOULD EASILY HAND OVER ON A WAGER...
...?!
HOW WOULD I KNOW THAT?!
SHE'S THE ONE WHO PUT IT ON THE TABLE!
AND...THE NECKLACE IS NOT MEANT FOR YOU!
IT'S NO ORDINARY NECK-LACE...
?
IT ONLY ACKNOWLEDGES LADY TSUNADE...
...IF ANYONE ELSE TRIES TO WEAR IT, THEY ALL EVENTUALLY...

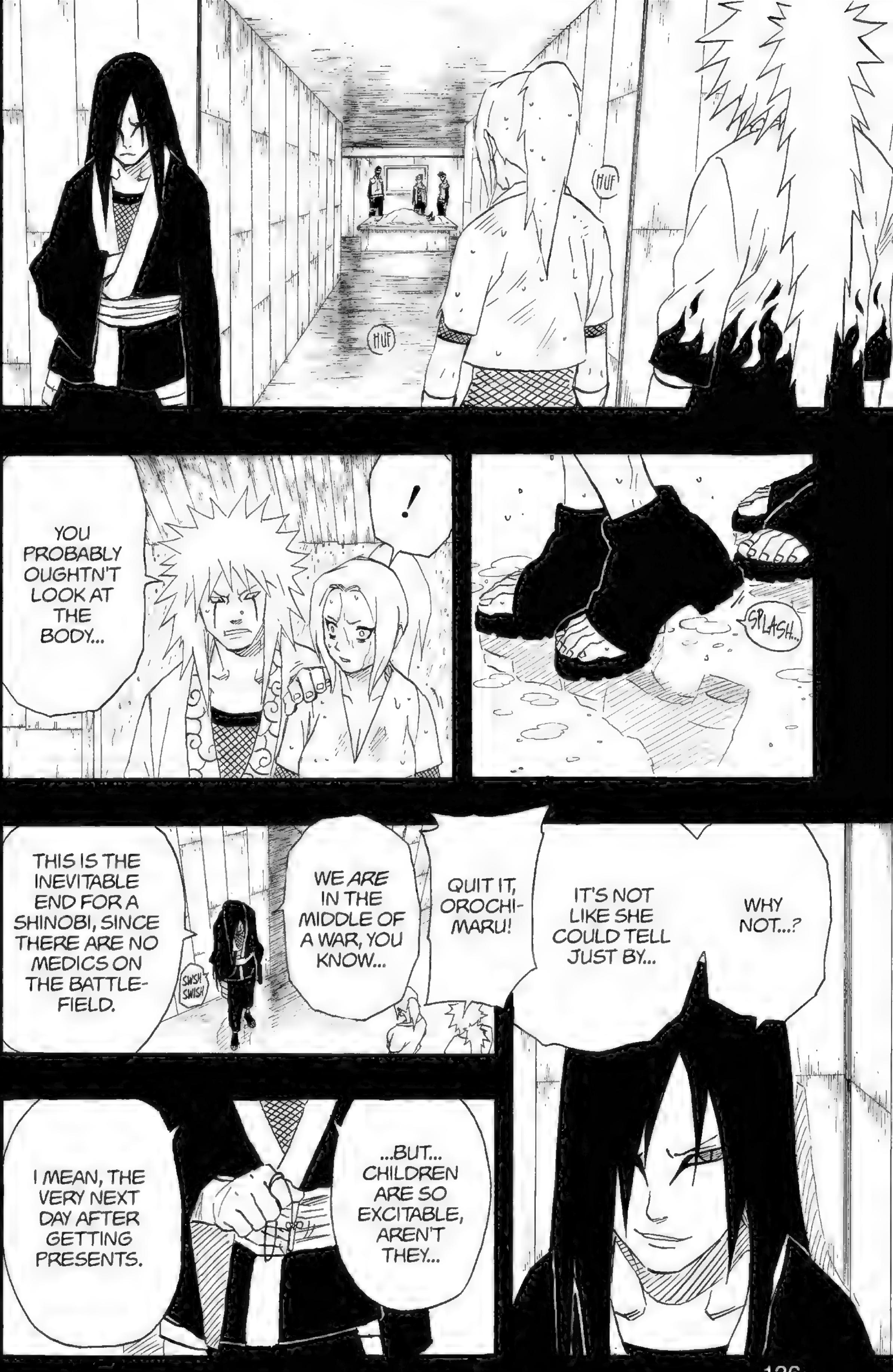

...DIE!!
...?!
短冊街


...BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU STILL HANG ON TO THE NECKLACE...
I THOUGHT YOU'D ALREADY LOST IT IN A WAGER.
HUMPH ...
...IT'S A MEMENTO, ISN'T IT...?
...

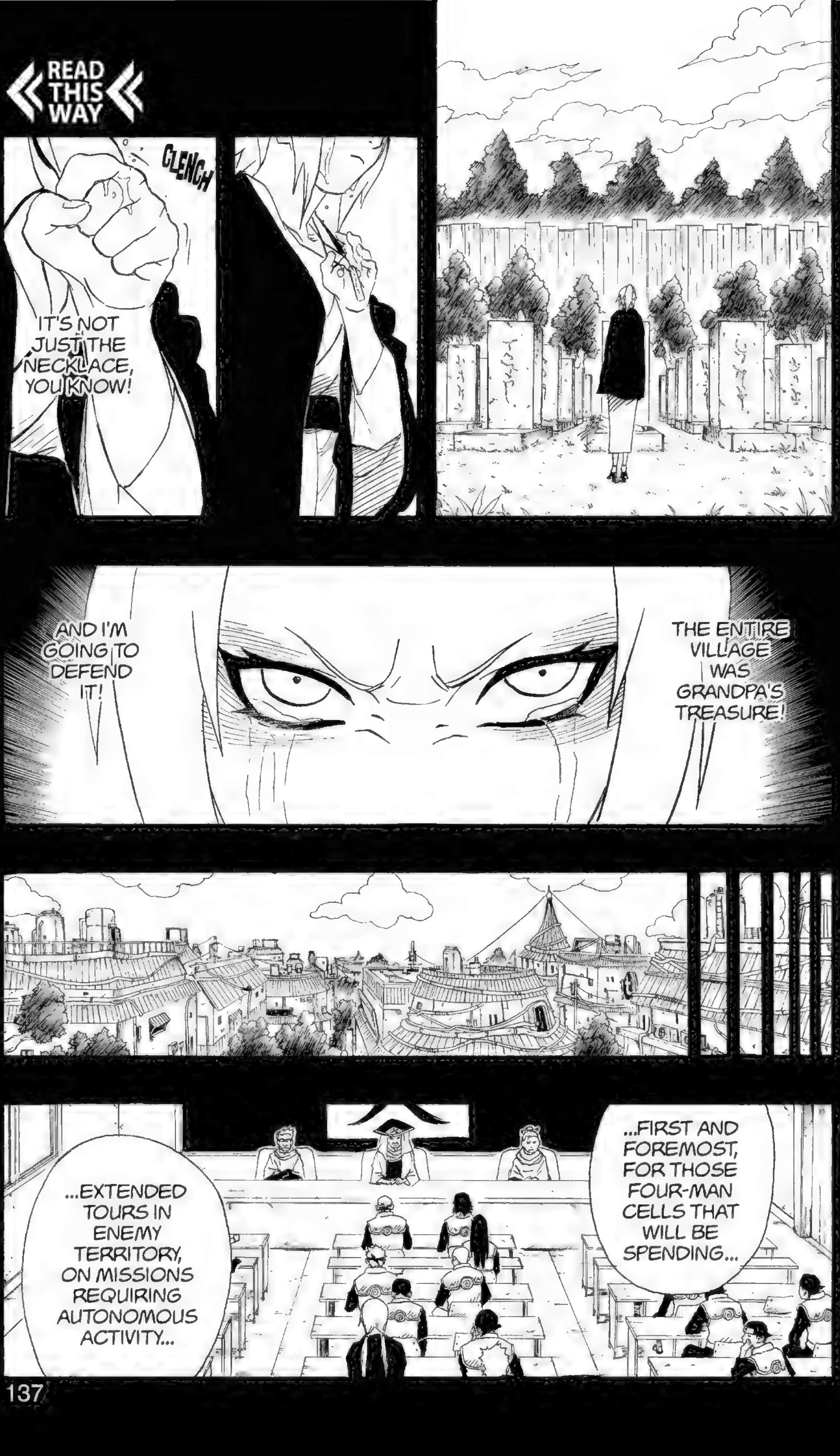

NAWAKI!
HAPPY 12th BIRTHDAY!
THWAP
YOU KNOW, I'M NOT A KID ANYMORE!
DON'T KEEP GETTING ME BIRTHDAY PRESENTS!
OH, COME ON!
YOU ARE STILL A KID!
BESIDES, HURRY UP AND OPEN IT!
I BET YOU'RE GONNA LIKE IT!
RIP RIP
?
!
BUT BIG SIS, ISN'T THIS...
YUP...IT WAS THE FIRST HOKAGE'S, OUR BELOVED GRANDFATHER'S, HOKAGE NECKLACE!
I LOVE YOU, SIS!
UNF
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR YOU TO HAVE IT.
I MEAN, YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED IT... SO TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT!

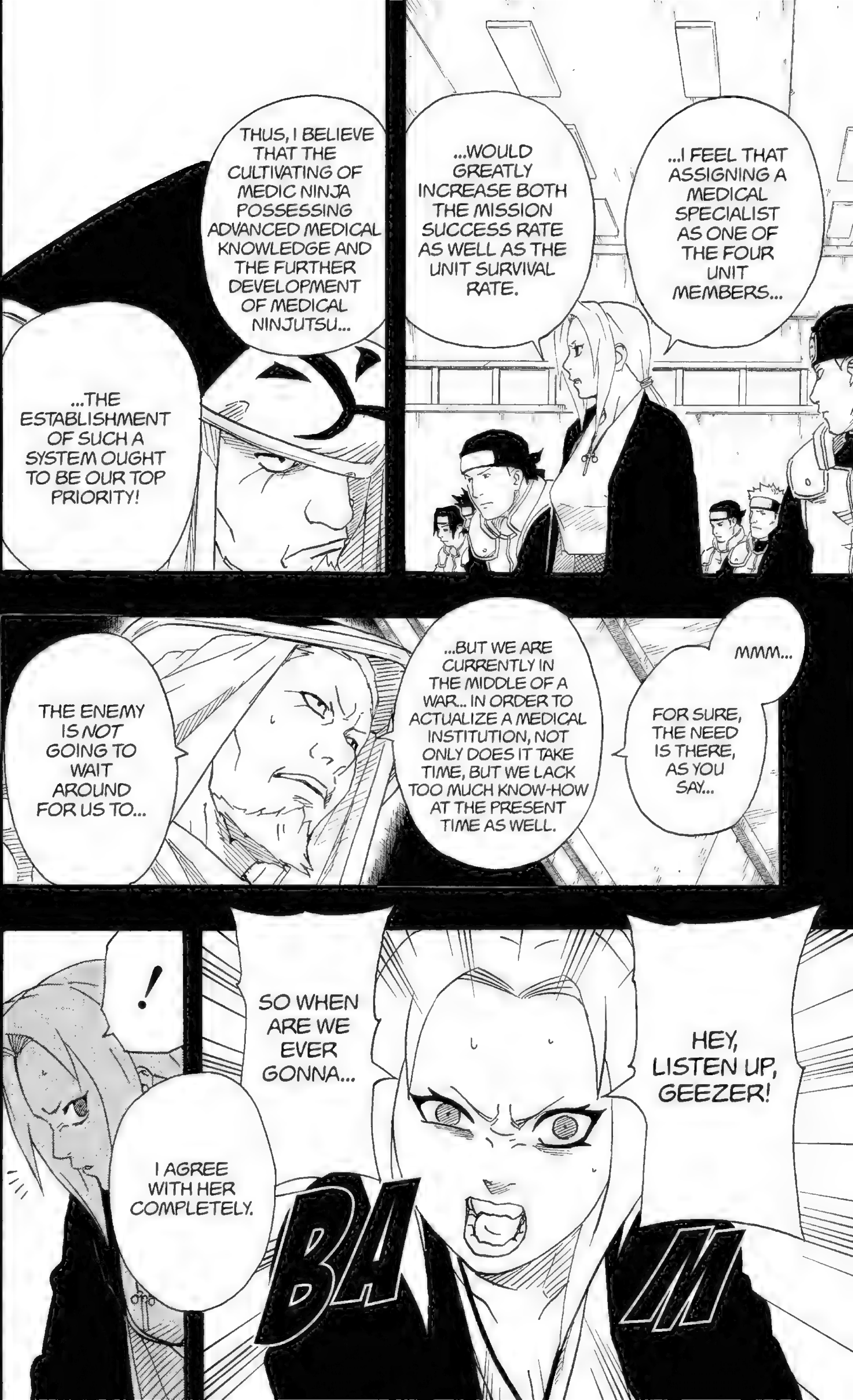

IT'S NOT JUST THIS NECKLACE, YOU KNOW!
WHOOSH
THE ENTIRE VILLAGE WAS GRANDPA'S TREASURE! AND I'M GOING TO DEFEND IT!
'CUZ I'M THE GRANDSON OF THE FIRST HOKAGE, THE BUILDER OF KONOHAGAKURE!
HO HO... NICE WORDS, BUT A MAN DOESN'T BREAK HIS WORD, YOU KNOW!
YUP!
I'M GONNA BE STRONG LIKE GRANDPA AND ONE DAY BE GRANTED THE TITLE OF HOKAGE!
'CUZ TO BE HOKAGE IS MY DREAM.
TAKE YOUR HEADBAND OFF, NAWAKI.
SST
?
JUST DO IT. I'VE GOT ONE MORE PRESENT FOR YOU.
A CHARM TO MAKE YOUR DREAM COME TRUE.
FFFT

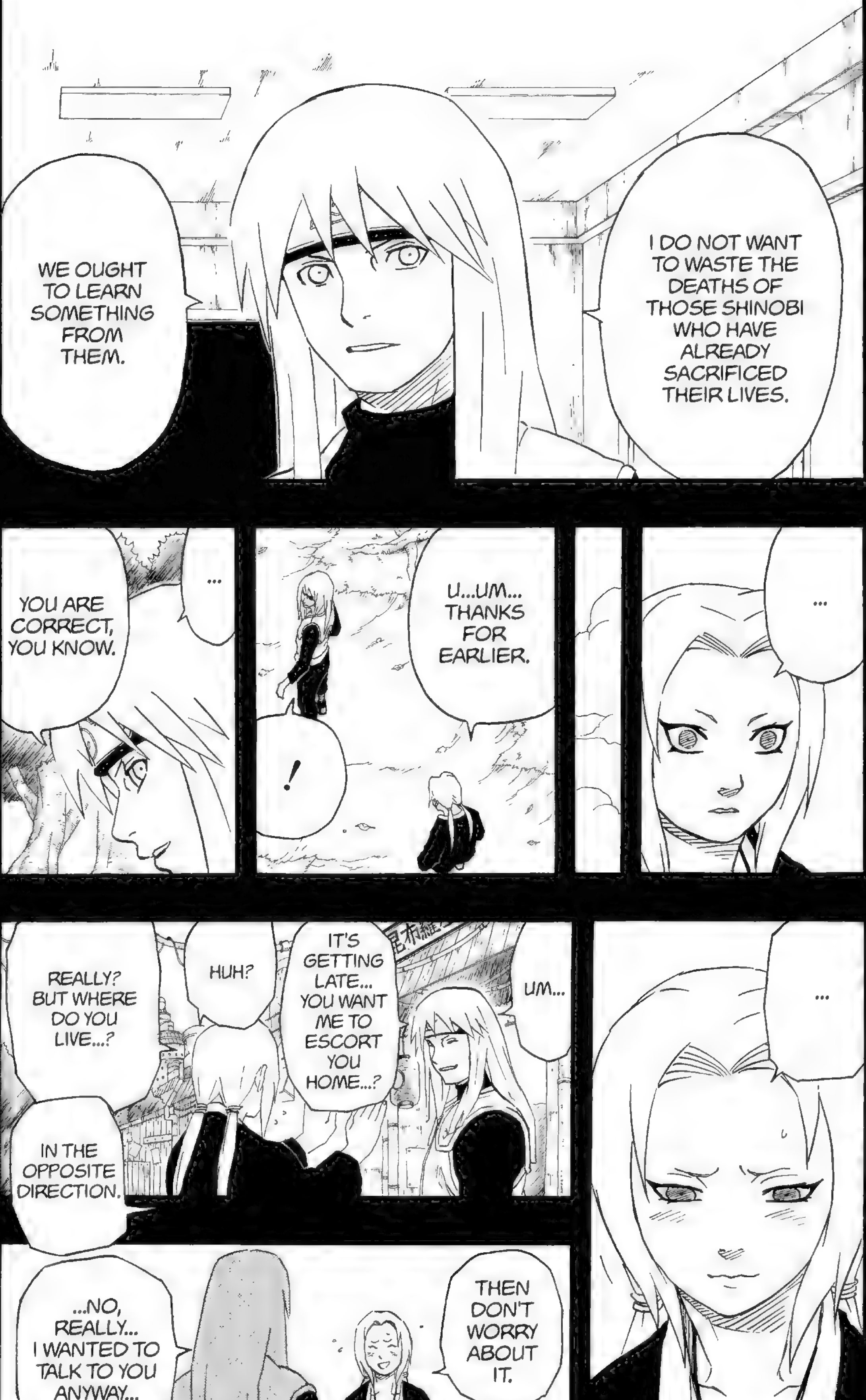

HUF
HUF
HUF

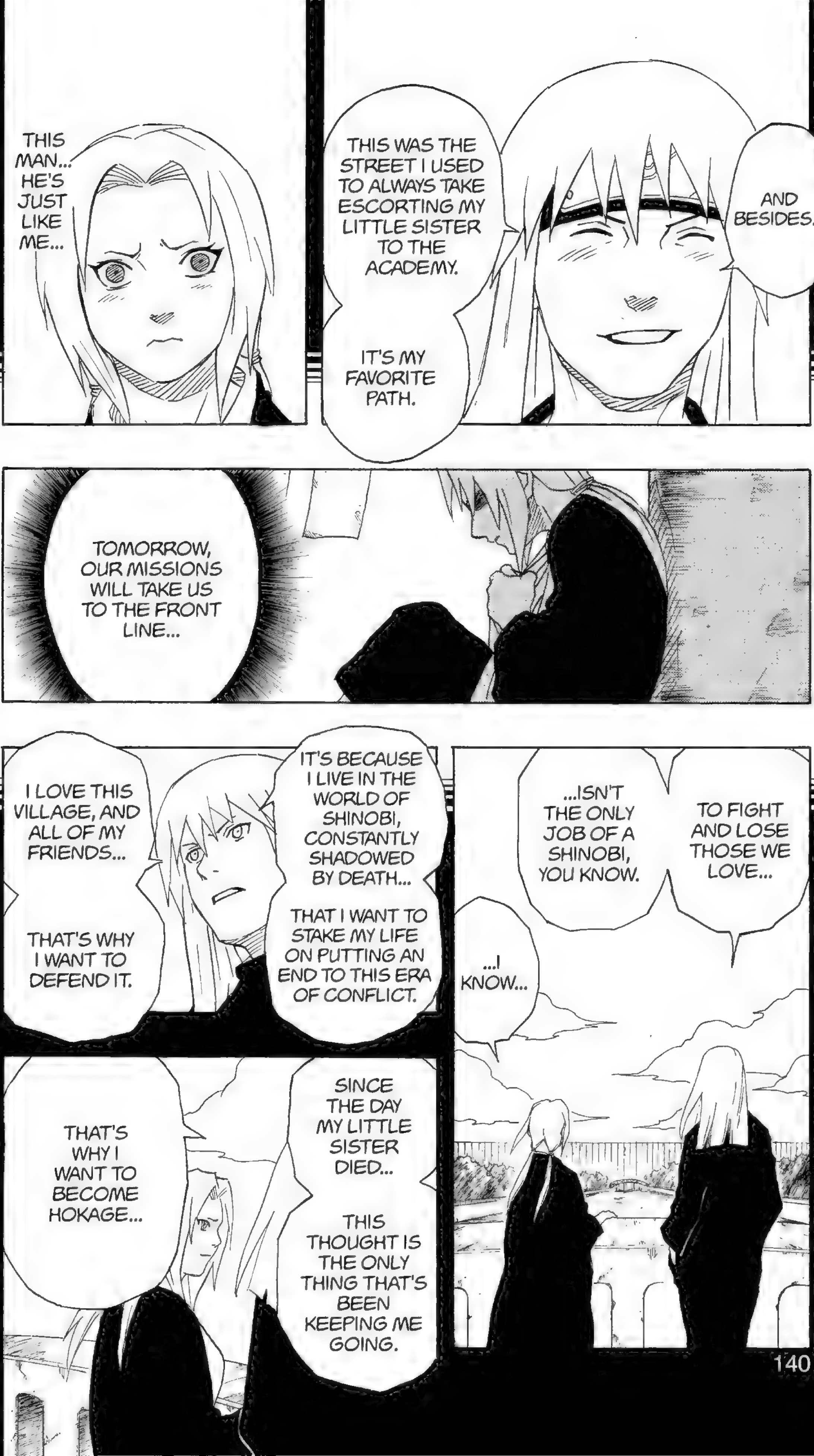

HUF
HUF
SPLASH...
!
YOU PROBABLY OUGHTN'T LOOK AT THE BODY...
WHY NOT...?
IT'S NOT LIKE SHE COULD TELL JUST BY...
QUIT IT, OROCHIMARU!
WE *ARE* IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR, YOU KNOW...
THIS IS THE INEVITABLE END FOR A SHINOBI, SINCE THERE ARE NO MEDICS ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
SWISH SWISH
...BUT... CHILDREN ARE SO EXCITABLE, AREN'T THEY...
I MEAN, THE VERY NEXT DAY AFTER GETTING PRESENTS.

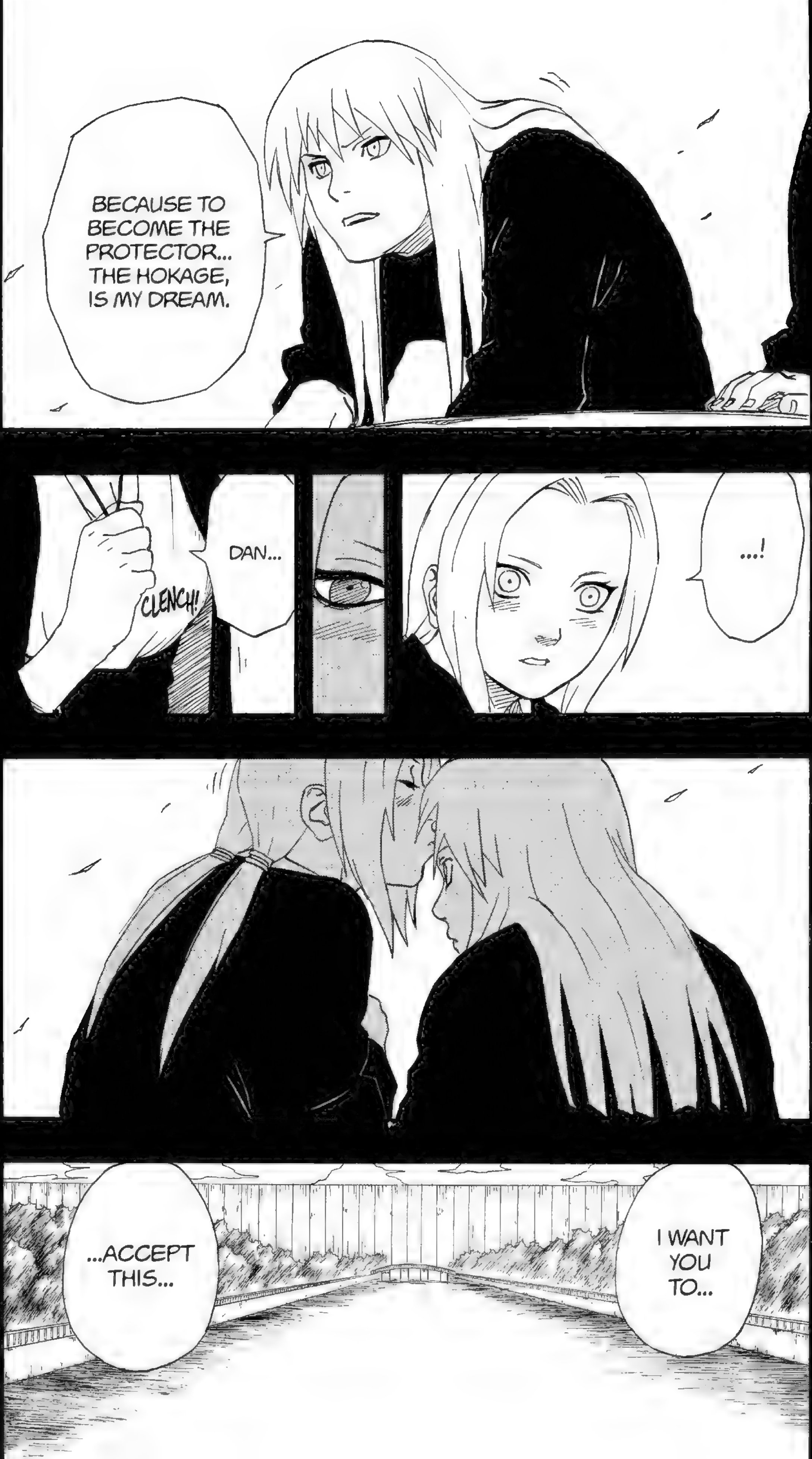
READ THIS WAY

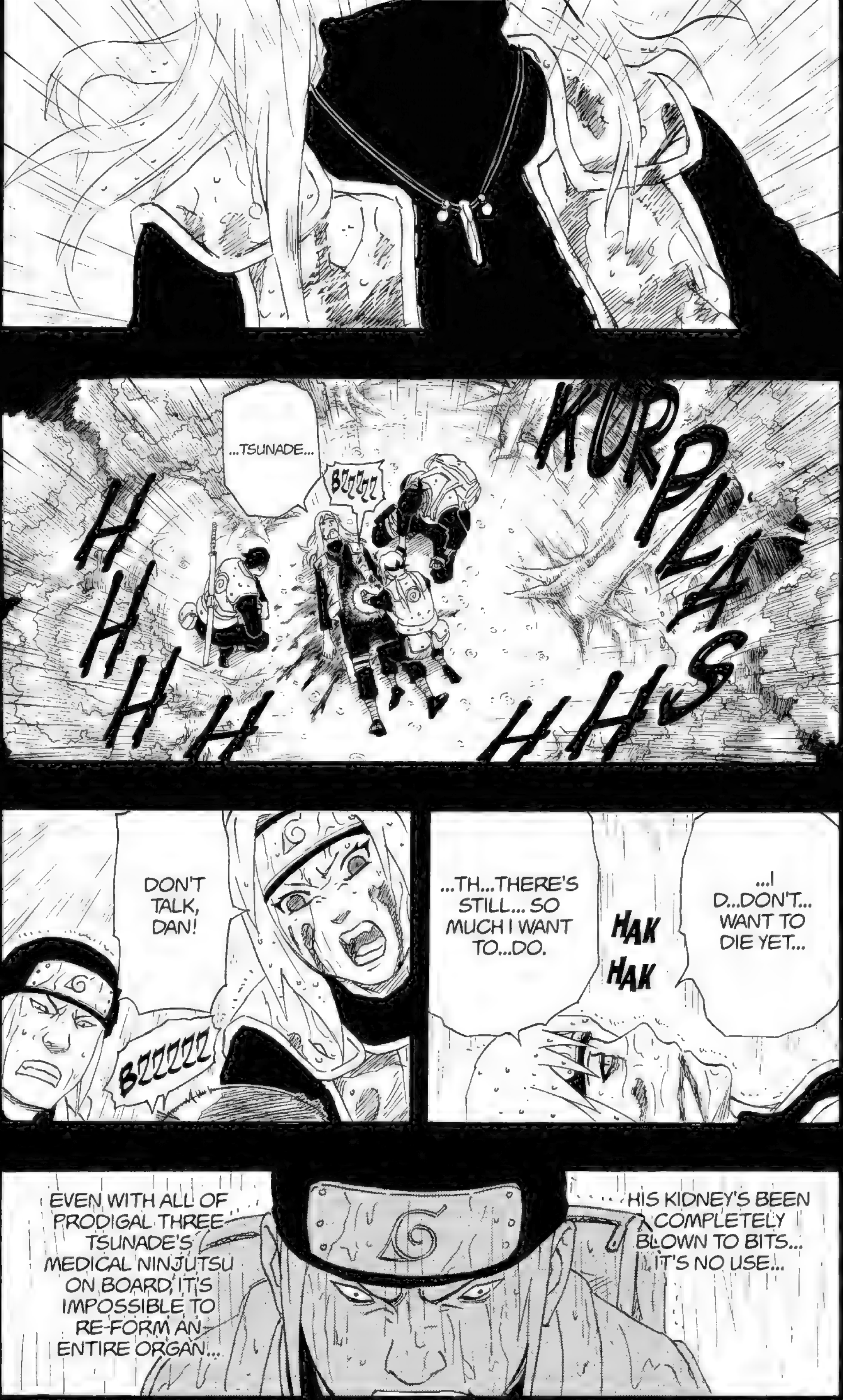

CLENCH
IT'S NOT JUST THE NECKLACE, YOU KNOW!
THE ENTIRE VILLAGE WAS GRANDPA'S TREASURE!
AND I'M GOING TO DEFEND IT!
...FIRST AND FOREMOST, FOR THOSE FOUR-MAN CELLS THAT WILL BE SPENDING...
...EXTENDED TOURS IN ENEMY TERRITORY, ON MISSIONS REQUIRING AUTONOMOUS ACTIVITY...

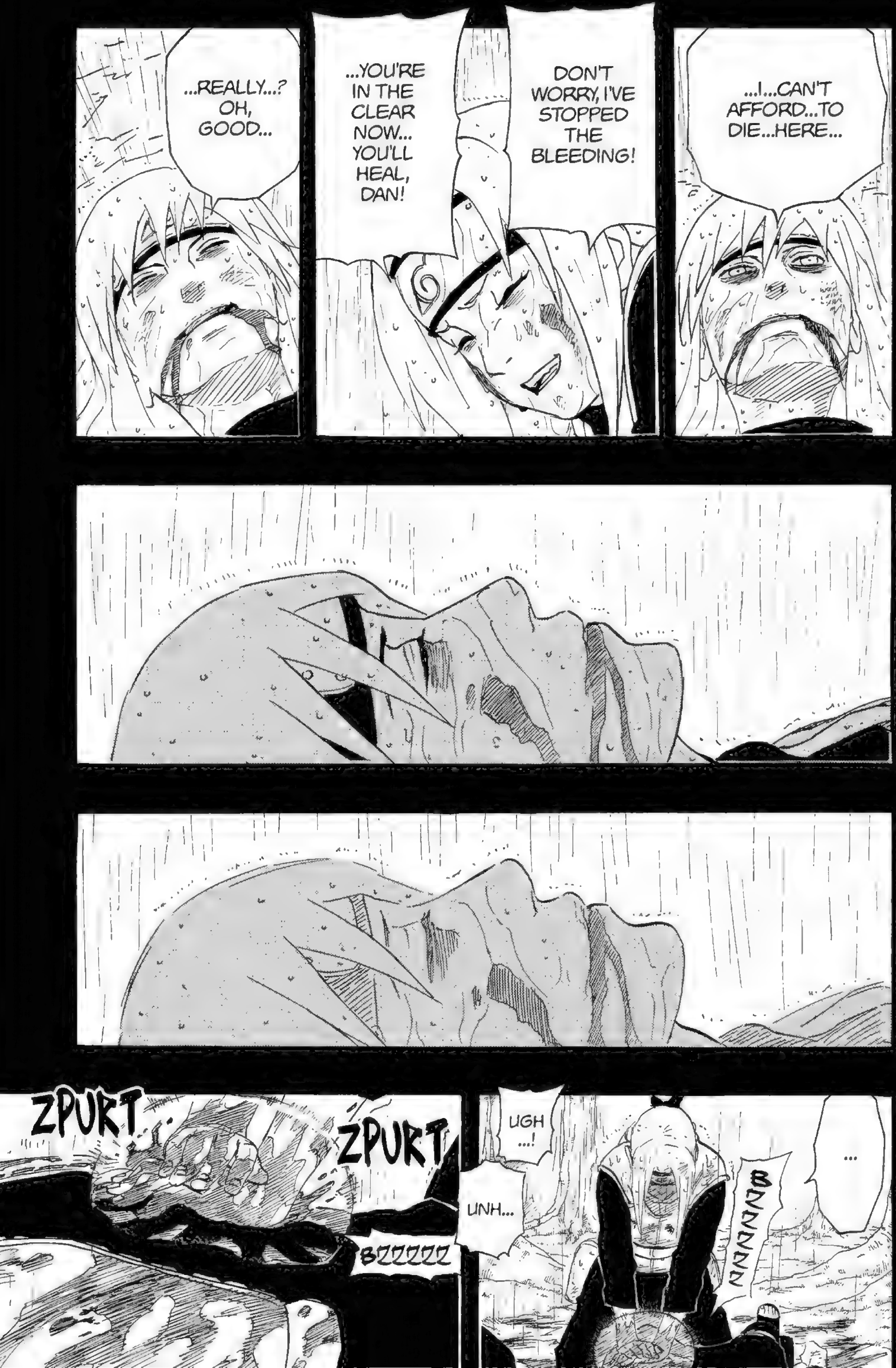

...I FEEL THAT ASSIGNING A MEDICAL SPECIALIST AS ONE OF THE FOUR UNIT MEMBERS...
...WOULD GREATLY INCREASE BOTH THE MISSION SUCCESS RATE AS WELL AS THE UNIT SURVIVAL RATE.
THUS, I BELIEVE THAT THE CULTIVATING OF MEDIC NINJA POSSESSING ADVANCED MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL NINJUTSU...
...THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH A SYSTEM OUGHT TO BE OUR TOP PRIORITY!
MMM... FOR SURE, THE NEED IS THERE, AS YOU SAY...
...BUT WE ARE CURRENTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR... IN ORDER TO ACTUALIZE A MEDICAL INSTITUTION, NOT ONLY DOES IT TAKE TIME, BUT WE LACK TOO MUCH KNOW-HOW AT THE PRESENT TIME AS WELL.
THE ENEMY IS NOT GOING TO WAIT AROUND FOR US TO...
HEY, LISTEN UP, GEEZER!
BAM
SO WHEN ARE WE EVER GONNA...
!
I AGREE WITH HER COMPLETELY.

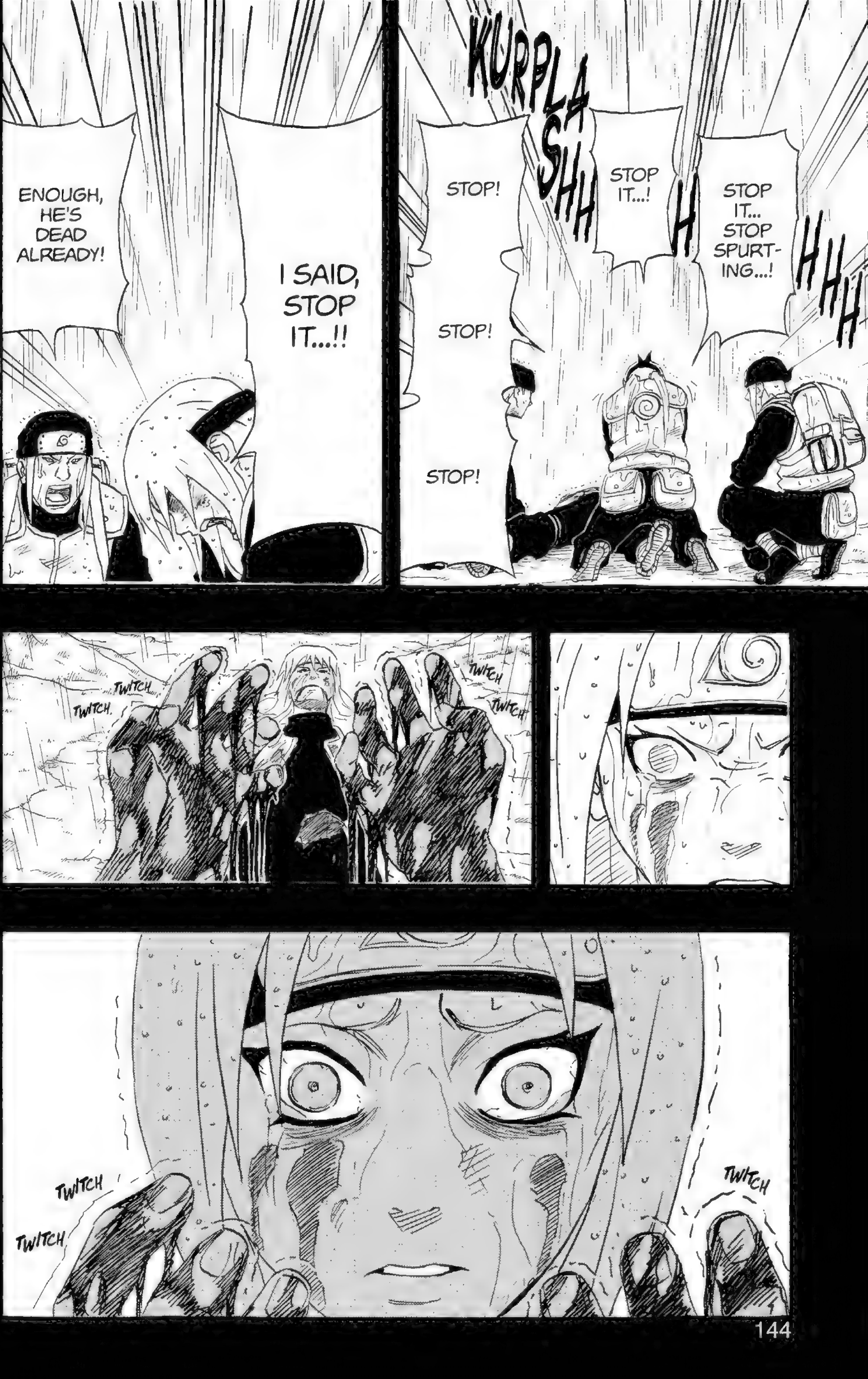

I DO NOT WANT TO WASTE THE DEATHS OF THOSE SHINOBI WHO HAVE ALREADY SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES.
WE OUGHT TO LEARN SOMETHING FROM THEM.
...
U...UM... THANKS FOR EARLIER.
!
...
YOU ARE CORRECT, YOU KNOW.
...
UM...
IT'S GETTING LATE... YOU WANT ME TO ESCORT YOU HOME...?
HUH?
REALLY? BUT WHERE DO YOU LIVE...?
IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.
THEN DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
...NO, REALLY... I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ANYWAY...

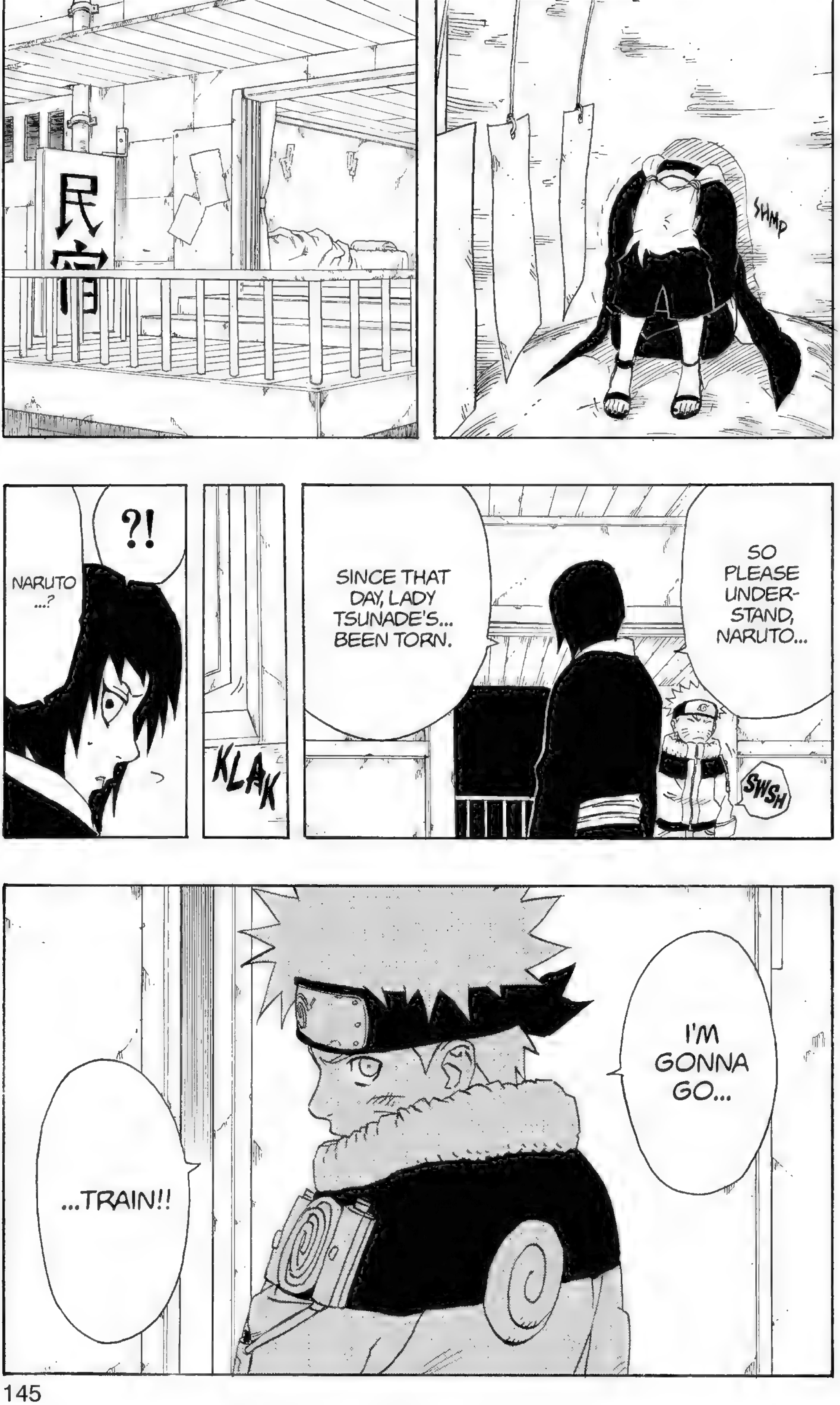

THIS MAN... HE'S JUST LIKE ME...
THIS WAS THE STREET I USED TO ALWAYS TAKE ESCORTING MY LITTLE SISTER TO THE ACADEMY.
IT'S MY FAVORITE PATH.
AND BESIDES...
TOMORROW, OUR MISSIONS WILL TAKE US TO THE FRONT LINE...
I LOVE THIS VILLAGE, AND ALL OF MY FRIENDS...
THAT'S WHY I WANT TO DEFEND IT.
IT'S BECAUSE I LIVE IN THE WORLD OF SHINOBI, CONSTANTLY SHADOWED BY DEATH...
THAT I WANT TO STAKE MY LIFE ON PUTTING AN END TO THIS ERA OF CONFLICT.
THAT'S WHY I WANT TO BECOME HOKAGE...
SINCE THE DAY MY LITTLE SISTER DIED...
THIS THOUGHT IS THE ONLY THING THAT'S BEEN KEEPING ME GOING.
TO FIGHT AND LOSE THOSE WE LOVE...
...ISN'T THE ONLY JOB OF A SHINOBI, YOU KNOW.
...I KNOW...


BECAUSE TO BECOME THE PROTECTOR... THE HOKAGE, IS MY DREAM.
...!
DAN...
CLENCH!
I WANT YOU TO...
...ACCEPT THIS...


KURPLASHHH
...TSUNADE...
BZZZZZ
HHHHH
...I D...DON'T... WANT TO DIE YET...
HAK HAK
...TH...THERE'S STILL... SO MUCH I WANT TO...DO.
DON'T TALK, DAN!
BZZZZZ
HIS KIDNEY'S BEEN COMPLETELY BLOWN TO BITS... IT'S NO USE...
EVEN WITH ALL OF PRODIGAL THREE TSUNADE'S MEDICAL NINJUTSU ON BOARD, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO RE-FORM AN ENTIRE ORGAN...


...I...CAN'T AFFORD...TO DIE...HERE...
DON'T WORRY, I'VE STOPPED THE BLEEDING!
...YOU'RE IN THE CLEAR NOW... YOU'LL HEAL, DAN!
...REALLY...? OH, GOOD...
...
BZZZZZZ
UGH ...!
UNH...
ZPURT
ZPURT
BZZZZZ


KURPLASHHHHH
STOP IT... STOP SPURTING...!
STOP IT...!
STOP!
STOP!
STOP!
I SAID, STOP IT...!!
ENOUGH, HE'S DEAD ALREADY!
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH


民宿
SHMP
SINCE THAT DAY, LADY TSUNADE'S... BEEN TORN.
SO PLEASE UNDERSTAND, NARUTO...
SWSH
KLAK
?!
NARUTO ...?
I'M GONNA GO...
...TRAIN!!

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 29

I FEEL LIKE I GEEKED TOO MUCH IN MY PERSONAL HISTORY PARTS 27 AND 28, SO I THINK I'LL WRITE AN EMOTIONAL STORY THIS TIME.

IN ANY CASE, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MY MANGA *KARAKURI* WINNING THE HOP☆STEP AWARD, MY ASSIGNED EDITOR MR. YAHAGI ASKED ME TO DRAW A DRAFT (KIND OF A ROUGH SKETCH OF A MANGA) OF A STAND-ALONE STORY. WHEN HE SAW *WANDERING DETOUR*, THE BIG MISTAKE OF A MANGA THAT I JUST DREW WILLY-NILLY, MR. YAHAGI SIMPLY SAID, THIS...ISN'T SHONEN MAGAZINE MATERIAL! A-HA-HA-HA. AND I WAS THE MASOCHISTIC NEWBIE WHO REPLIED, SO IT'S A REJECT... HUH ACTUALLY REVELING IN THE REVERBERATION OF THE WORD REJECTION AND EVEN HAPPILY SELF-PROCLAIMING THAT IT WAS A REJECT (SEE VOLUME 4, PAGE 26'S KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S FIRST MANGA REJECT SPECIAL).

LATER ON, MR. YAHAGI ENCOURAGED ME WITH WHY DON'T YOU DRAW A MORE SHÔNEN-STYLE BATTLE EPIC! SO I EQUALLY EAGERLY REPLIED, RIGHT! AND WANTING TO MEET MR. YAHAGI'S EXPECTATIONS, I IMMEDIATELY SET OUT TO THINK UP A NEW VERSION OF MY WINNING WORK, *KARAKURI*. OF COURSE THE STORY OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KID AND HIS MISADVENTURES ON THE WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL ISN'T ENTERTAINING! WHAT A FOOL I HAD BEEN! I HADN'T UNDERSTOOD ANYTHING! AND THE REGRET WENT ON... SO I QUICKLY DREW AN ALTERNATE VERSION OF *KARAKURI* AND MAILED IT IN...THIS TIME, FOR SURE...

MR. YAHAGI SIMPLY SAID, ER...I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT AT ALL! A-HA-HA-HA. SO AGAIN, I SELF-PROFESSED, ...WHICH MEANS...IT'S REJECTED, RIGHT...AND ONCE AGAIN, I HADN'T MET MR. YAHAGI'S EXPECTATIONS. ...THIS TIME, I LOST MY EAGERNESS. I BECAME QUITE DEPRESSED, IN FACT. ...REALITY IS HARSH. ...THEN ONE DAY, I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM MR. YAHAGI. WHEN I EXAMINED IT, I REALIZED IT CONTAINED TWO FULL PAGES OF POINTERS ABOUT HOW TO DRAW MANGA AND OTHER ADVICE. AND, WHEN I GOT TO THE END OF THAT LETTER...MY EYES STARTED WELLING A BIT WITH TEARS. HERE'S WHAT IT SAID...

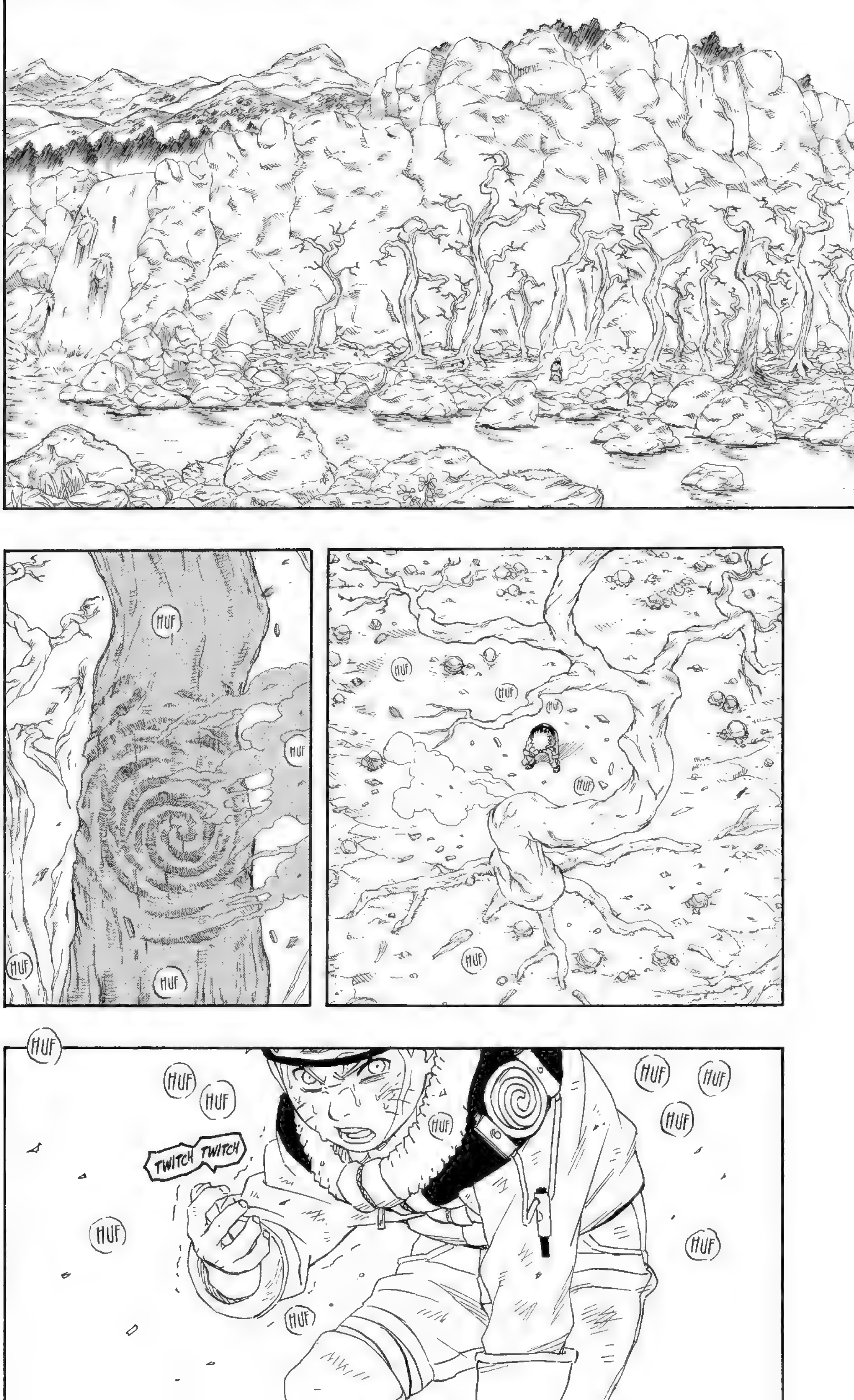
"YOU DO HAVE TALENT. PLEASE KEEP TRYING."

EVEN IF IT WERE A LIE OR FLATTERY, IT STILL MADE ME HAPPY! I HAD BEEN DEPRESSED, BUT IT RENEWED MY DETERMINATION! IMMEDIATELY, I STARTED DRAWING A DRAFT. AND THEN, WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MR. YAHAGI HIMSELF WAS PLANNING TO PAY ME A PERSONAL VISIT TO MY HOUSE (IN KYUSHU) TO GO OVER IT, I PUT GREAT DRIVE INTO MY DRAFT, AND WENT TO MEET MR. YAHAGI AT MY LOCAL MISTER DONUT. I'M NOT GOING TO WASTE THOSE TEARS I SHED, I SWORE TO MYSELF! I PUT GREAT ENERGY INTO THIS DRAFT! THIS TIME FOR SURE!

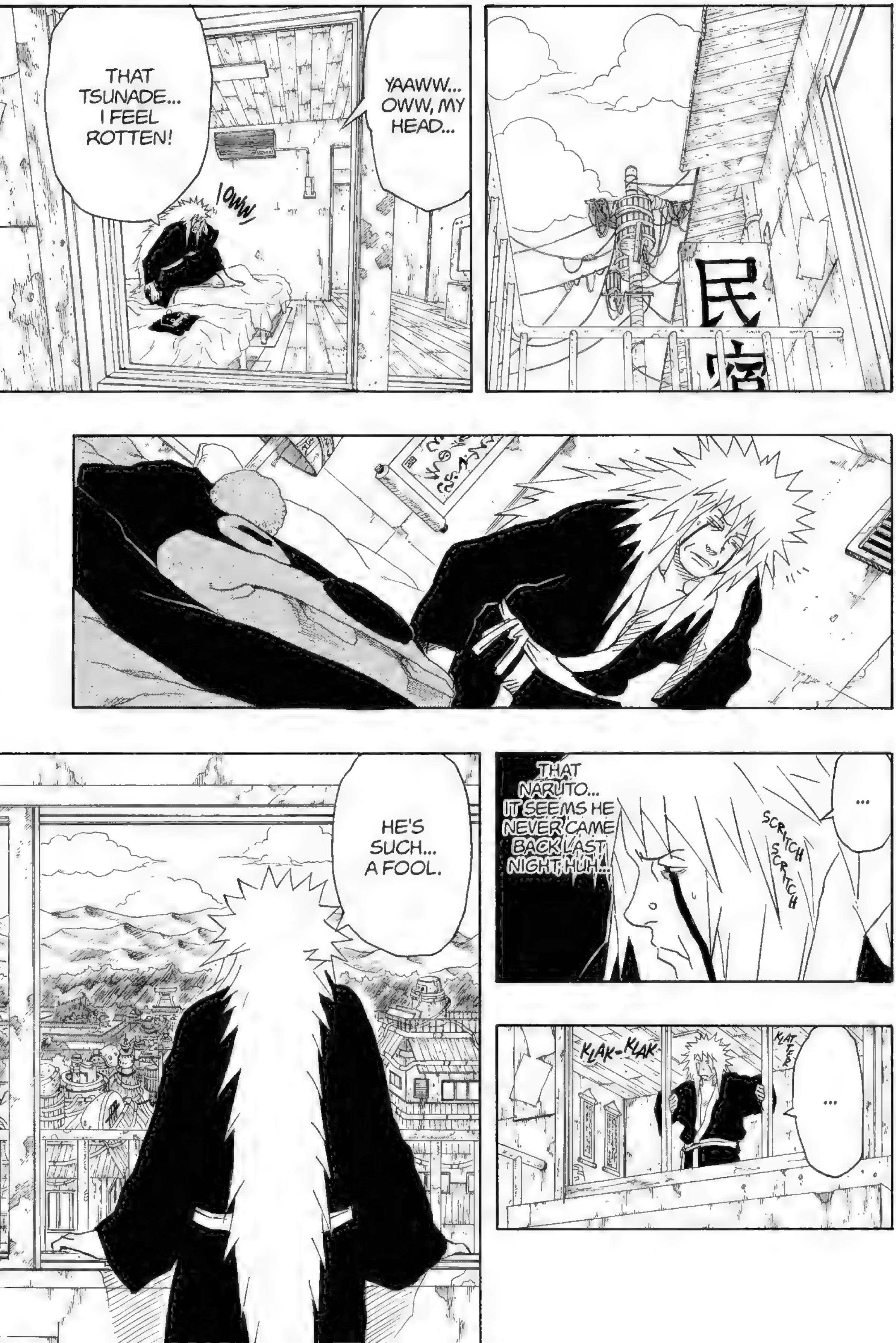
HE TOOK A LOOK AT THE MANGA, THEN UTTERED, "THIS ISN'T REALLY MANGA..."

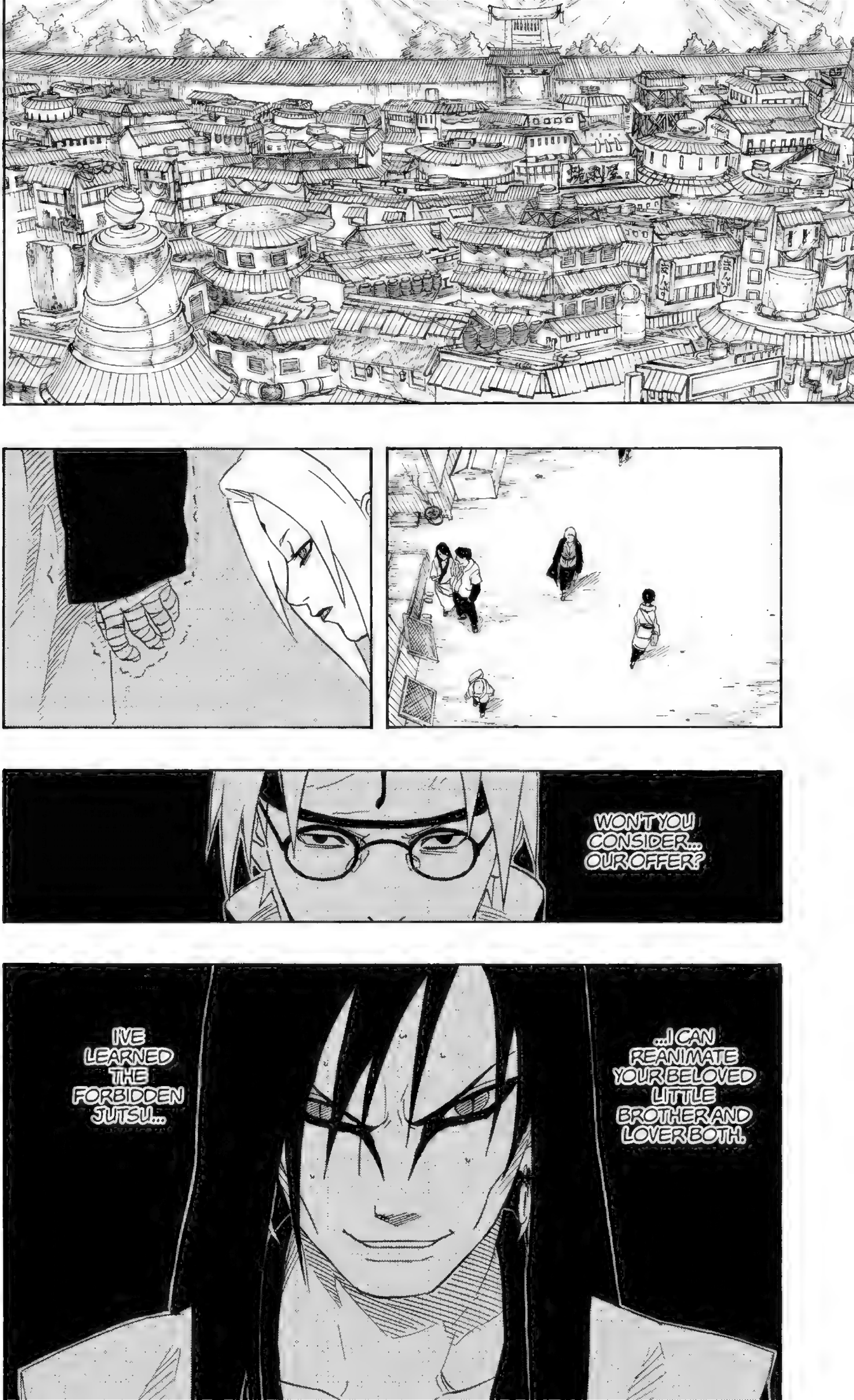
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY ANYMORE...SINCE THEN, I'VE GOTTEN DEPRESSED COUNTLESS TIMES, BUT EACH TIME I WOULD PULL OUT THAT LETTER AND REREAD IT TO THE END AGAIN...IT'S A PRECIOUS LETTER THAT I STILL PEEK AT FROM TIME TO TIME EVEN NOW.

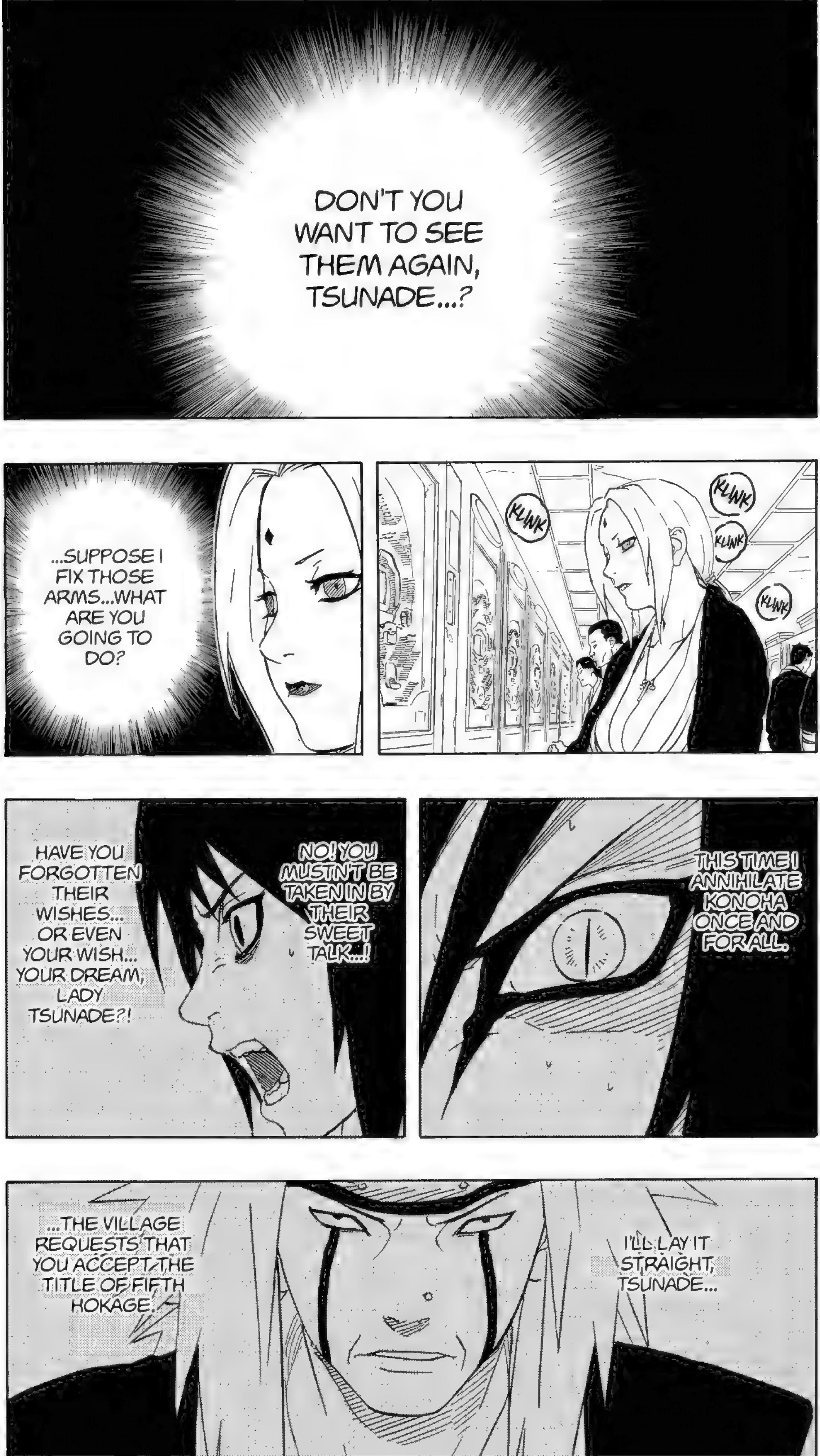
Number 161: Tsunade's Choice!!

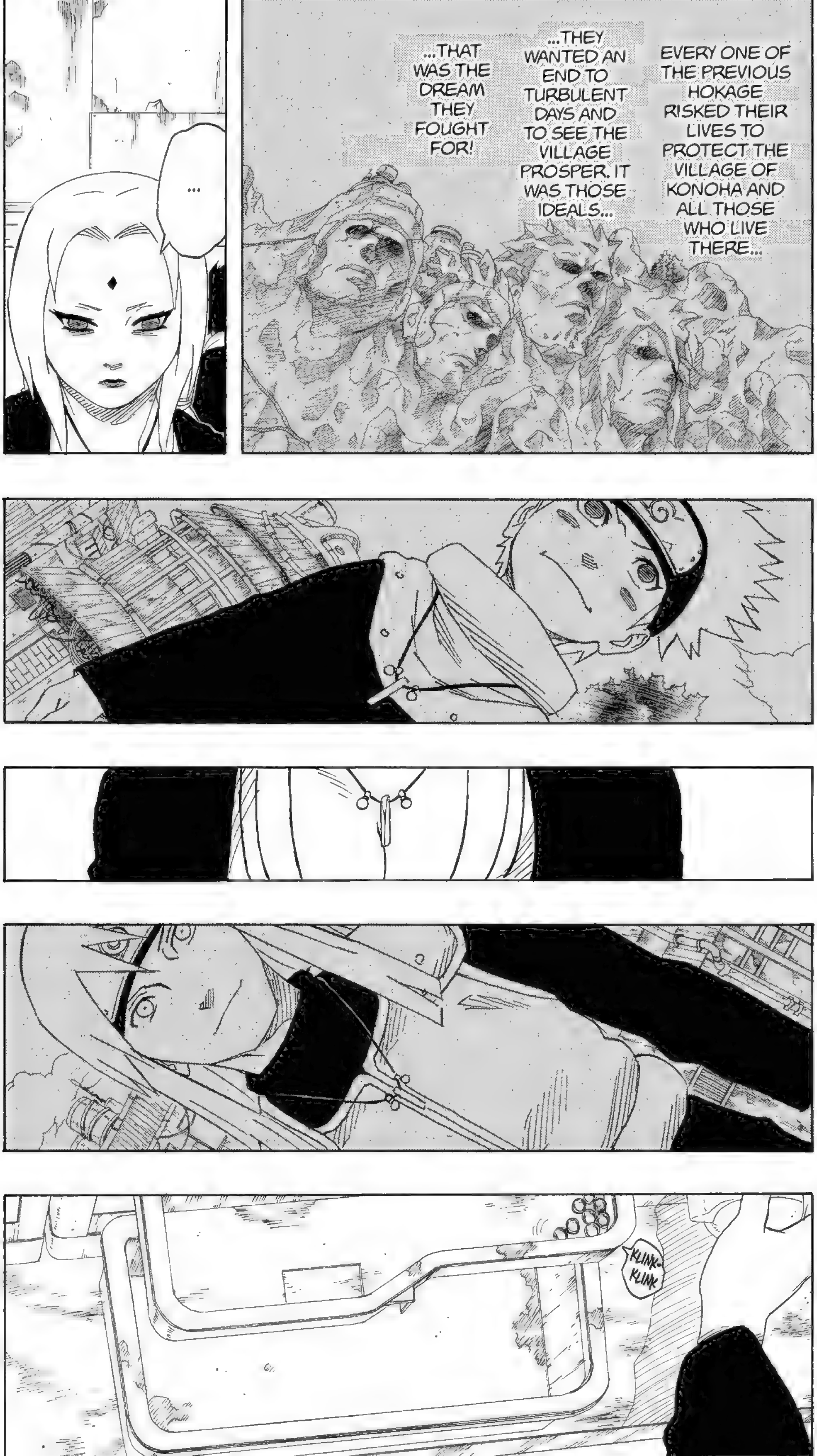

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
TWITCH TWITCH

READ THIS WAY

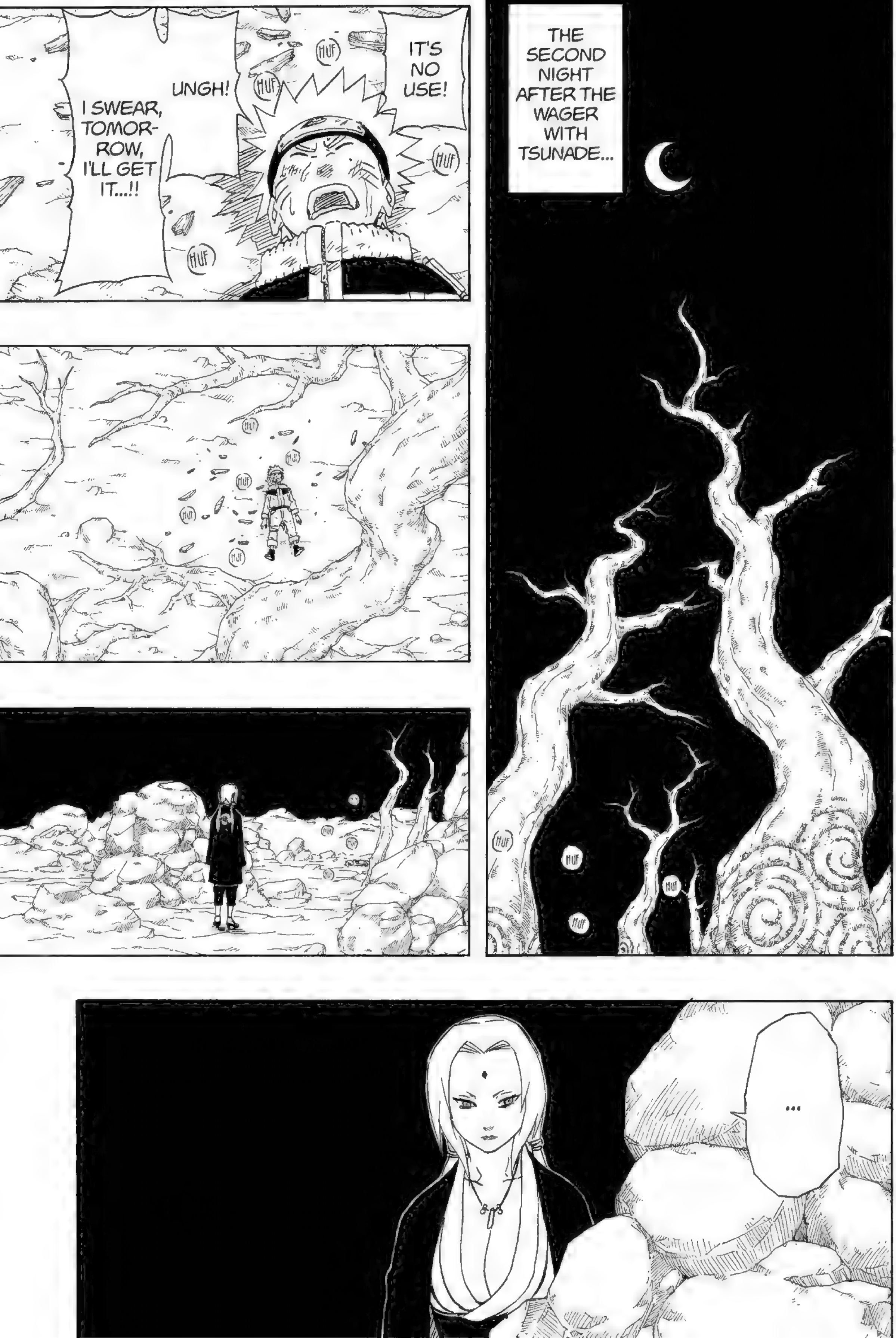

民宿
YAAWW... OWW, MY HEAD...
THAT TSUNADE... I FEEL ROTTEN!
OWW
...
SCRITCH SCRITCH
THAT NARUTO... IT SEEMS HE NEVER CAME BACK LAST NIGHT, HUH...
KLATTER
KLAK-KLAK
...
HE'S SUCH... A FOOL.

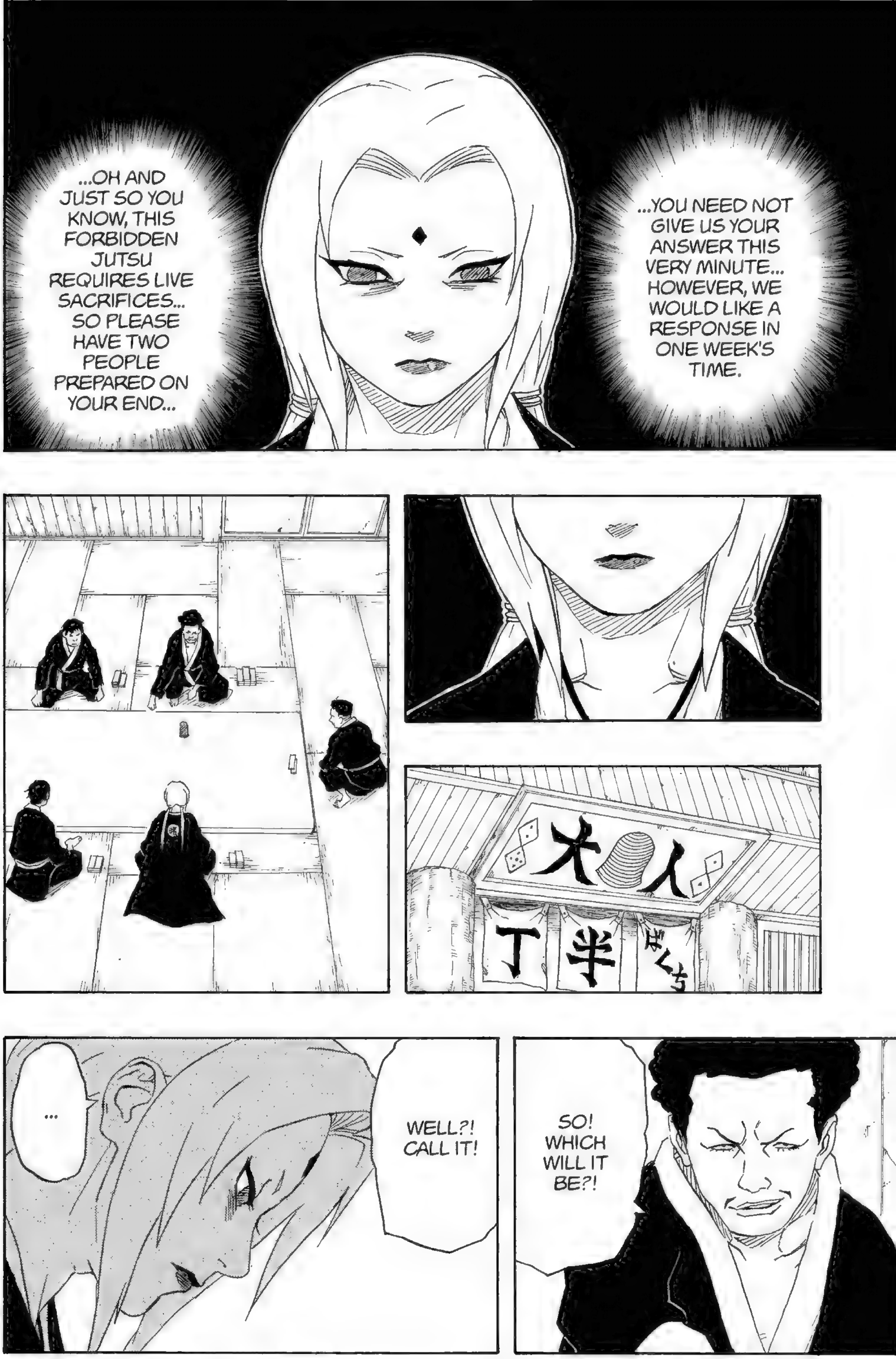

WON'T YOU CONSIDER... OUR OFFER?
I'VE LEARNED THE FORBIDDEN JUTSU...
...I CAN REANIMATE YOUR BELOVED LITTLE BROTHER AND LOVER BOTH.


DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE THEM AGAIN, TSUNADE...?
KLINK
KLINK
KLINK
KLINK
...SUPPOSE I FIX THOSE ARMS...WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
THIS TIME I ANNIHILATE KONOHA ONCE AND FOR ALL.
NO! YOU MUSTN'T BE TAKEN IN BY THEIR SWEET TALK...!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THEIR WISHES... OR EVEN YOUR WISH... YOUR DREAM, LADY TSUNADE?!
I'LL LAY IT STRAIGHT, TSUNADE...
...THE VILLAGE REQUESTS THAT YOU ACCEPT THE TITLE OF FIFTH HOKAGE.

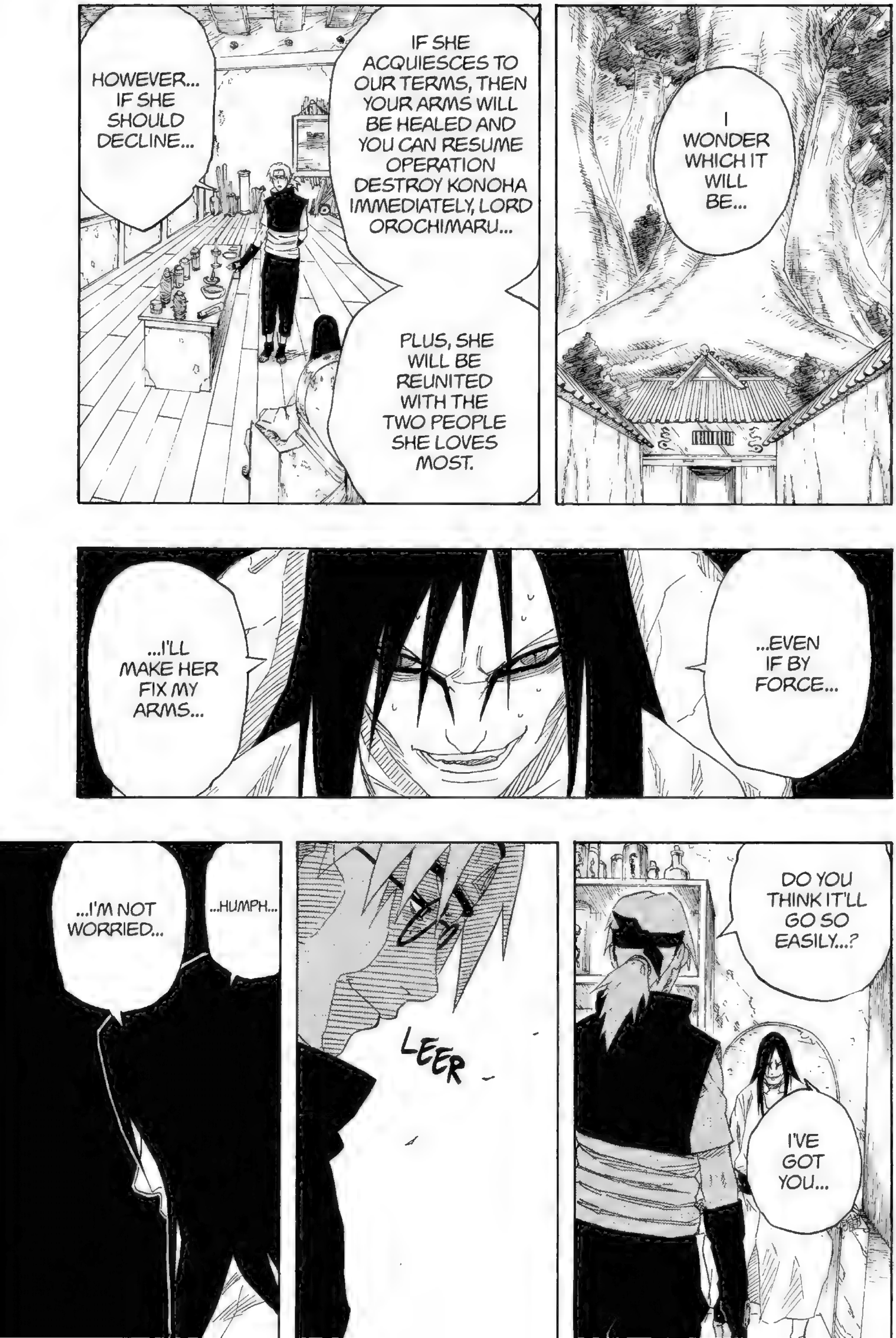

EVERY ONE OF THE PREVIOUS HOKAGE RISKED THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT THE VILLAGE OF KONOHA AND ALL THOSE WHO LIVE THERE...
...THEY WANTED AN END TO TURBULENT DAYS AND TO SEE THE VILLAGE PROSPER. IT WAS THOSE IDEALS...
...THAT WAS THE DREAM THEY FOUGHT FOR!
...
KLINK-KLINK

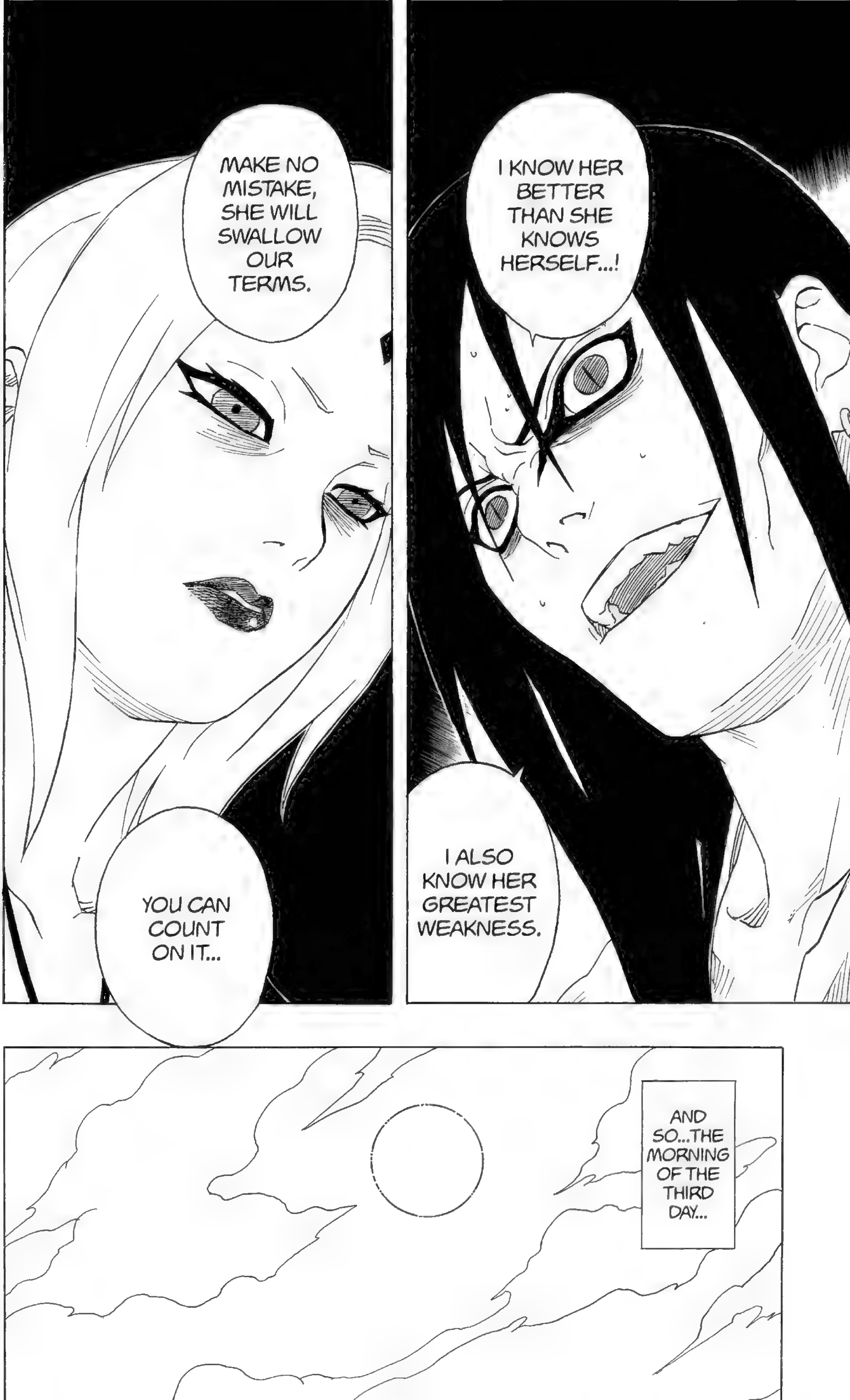
READ THIS WAY

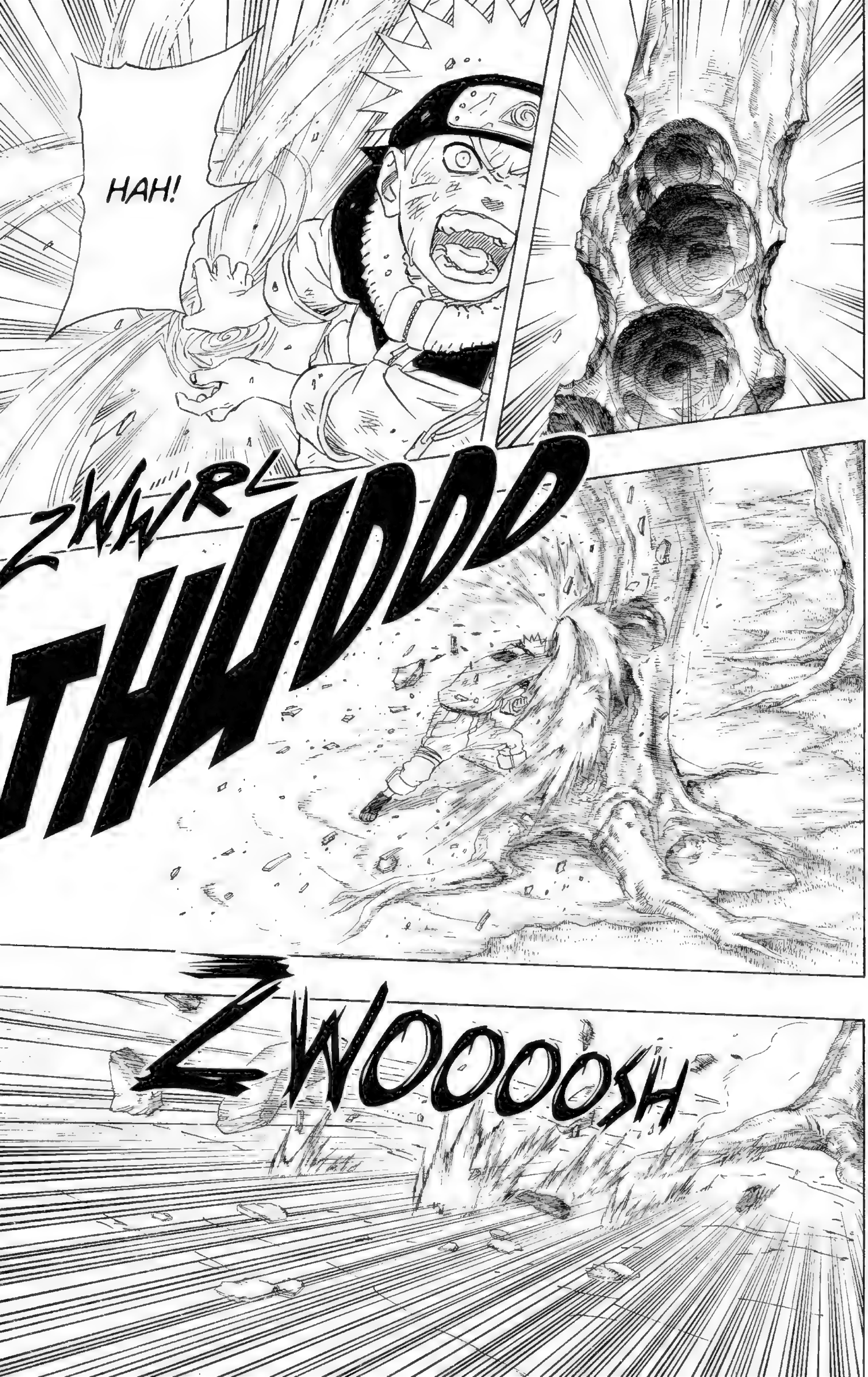

THE SECOND NIGHT AFTER THE WAGER WITH TSUNADE...
HUF
HUF
HUF
IT'S NO USE!
HUF
HUF
UNGH!
I SWEAR, TOMORROW, I'LL GET IT...!!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
...

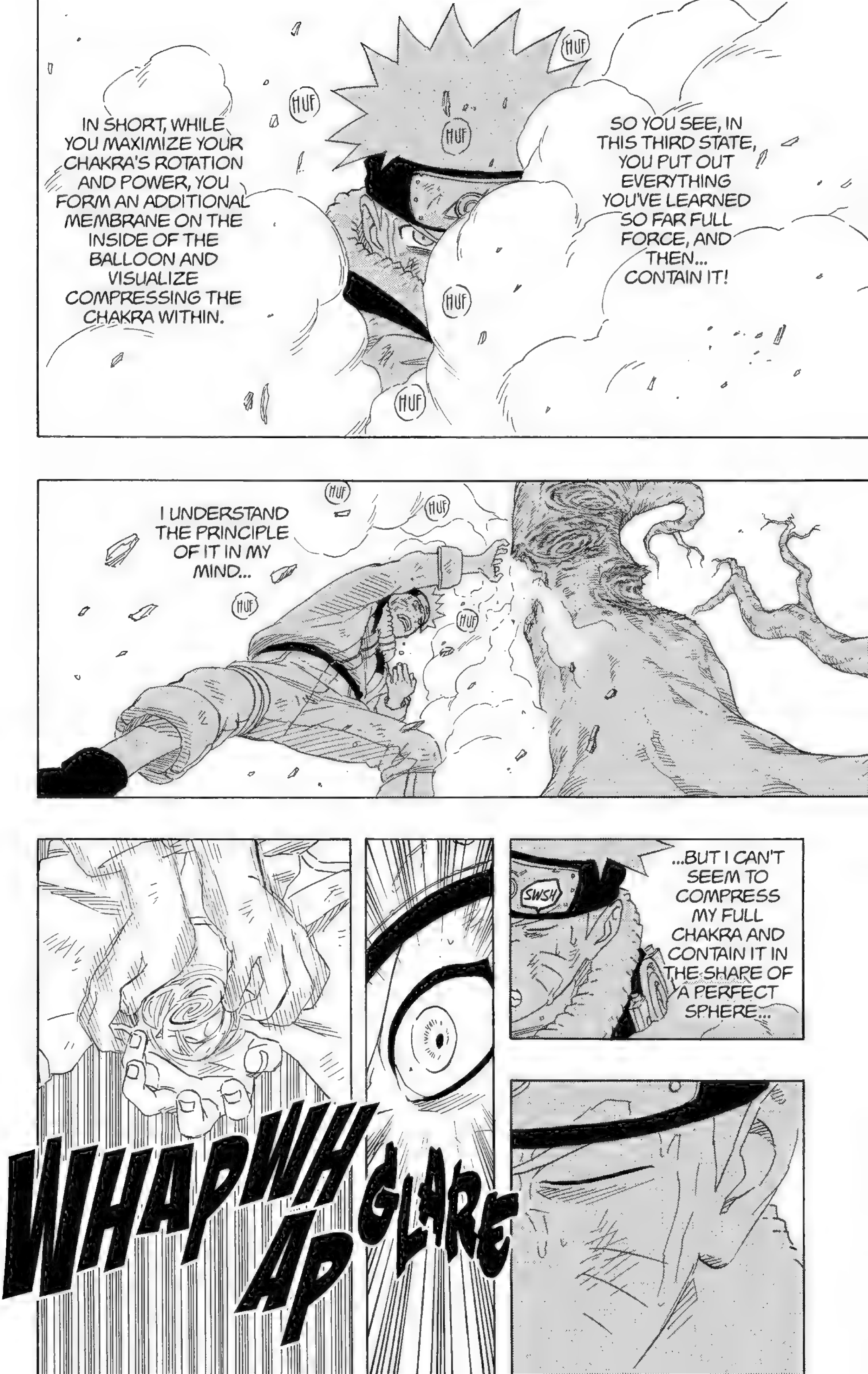

...YOU NEED NOT GIVE US YOUR ANSWER THIS VERY MINUTE... HOWEVER, WE WOULD LIKE A RESPONSE IN ONE WEEK'S TIME.
...OH AND JUST SO YOU KNOW, THIS FORBIDDEN JUTSU REQUIRES LIVE SACRIFICES... SO PLEASE HAVE TWO PEOPLE PREPARED ON YOUR END...
大 人
丁 半 ばくち
SO! WHICH WILL IT BE?!
WELL?! CALL IT!
...

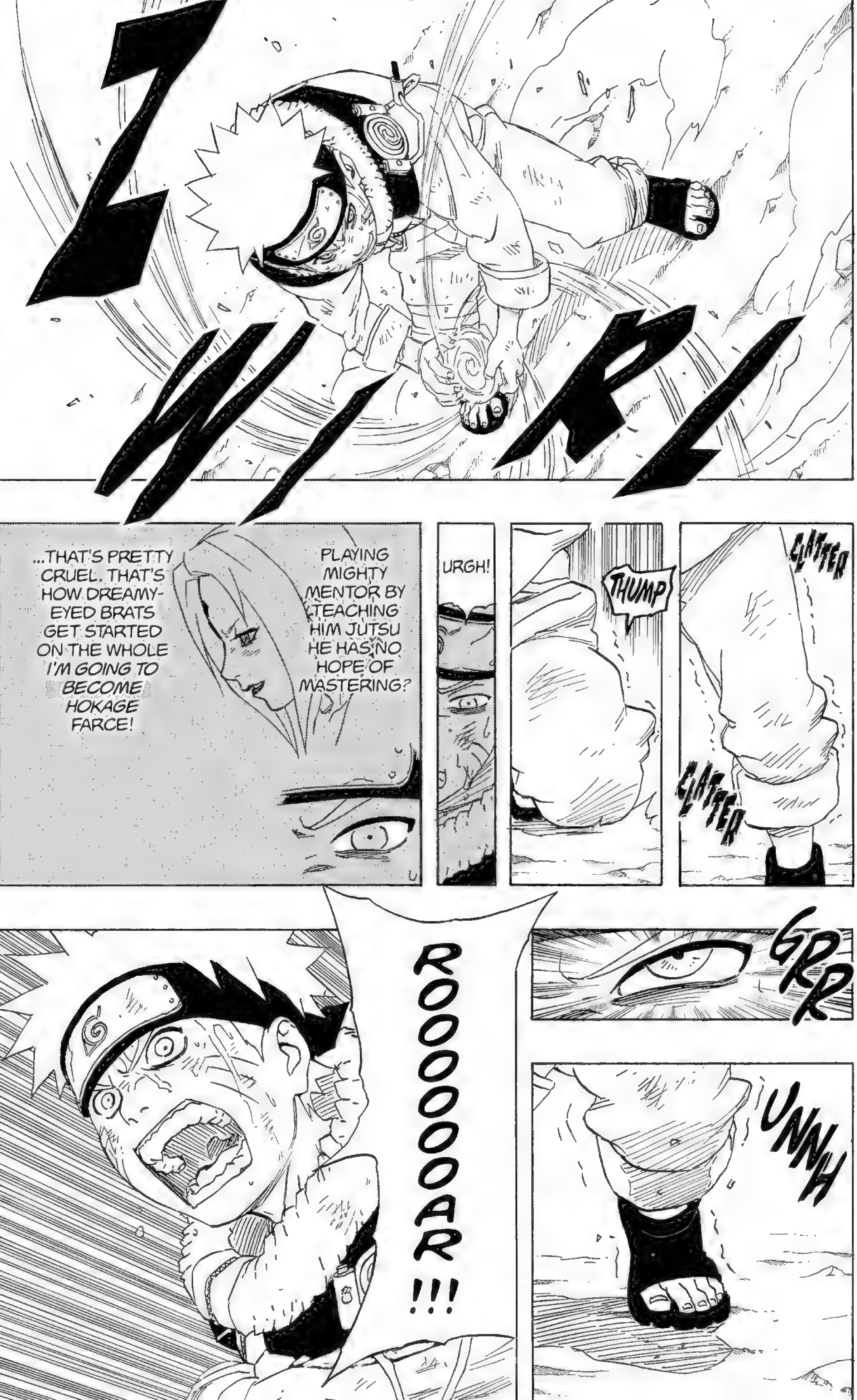
READ THIS WAY

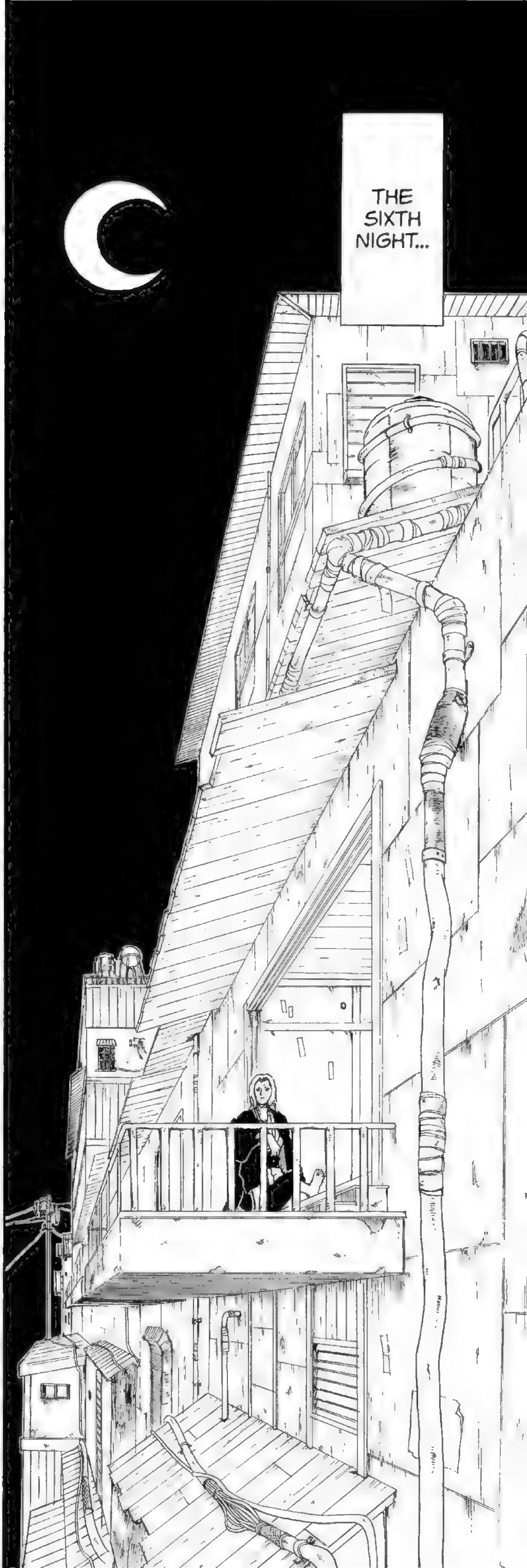

I WONDER WHICH IT WILL BE...
IF SHE ACQUIESCES TO OUR TERMS, THEN YOUR ARMS WILL BE HEALED AND YOU CAN RESUME OPERATION DESTROY KONOHA IMMEDIATELY, LORD OROCHIMARU...
PLUS, SHE WILL BE REUNITED WITH THE TWO PEOPLE SHE LOVES MOST.
HOWEVER... IF SHE SHOULD DECLINE...
...EVEN IF BY FORCE...
...I'LL MAKE HER FIX MY ARMS...
DO YOU THINK IT'LL GO SO EASILY...?
I'VE GOT YOU...
LEER
...HUMPH...
...I'M NOT WORRIED...

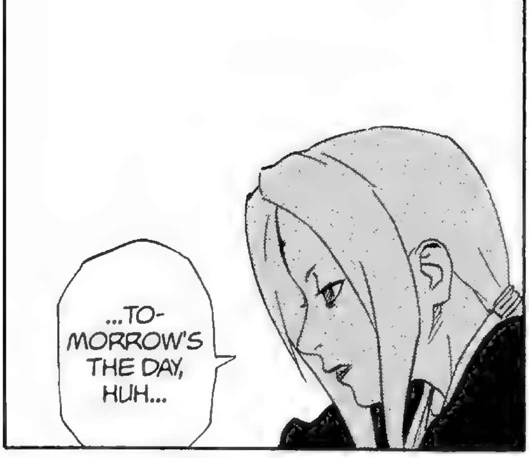

I KNOW HER BETTER THAN SHE KNOWS HERSELF...!
I ALSO KNOW HER GREATEST WEAKNESS.
MAKE NO MISTAKE, SHE WILL SWALLOW OUR TERMS.
YOU CAN COUNT ON IT...
AND SO...THE MORNING OF THE THIRD DAY...

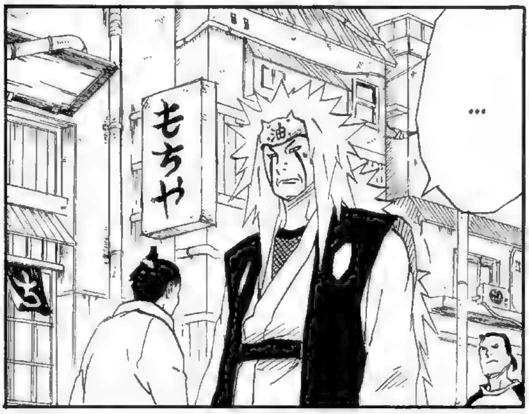

HAH!
ZWWIRL
THUDDD
ZWOOOOSH

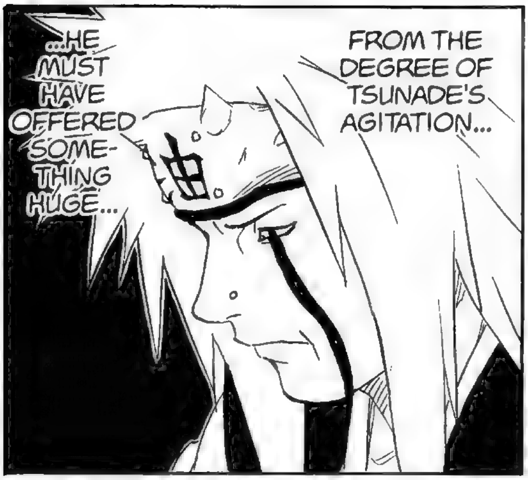

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
SO YOU SEE, IN THIS THIRD STATE, YOU PUT OUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE LEARNED SO FAR FULL FORCE, AND THEN... CONTAIN IT!
IN SHORT, WHILE YOU MAXIMIZE YOUR CHAKRA'S ROTATION AND POWER, YOU FORM AN ADDITIONAL MEMBRANE ON THE INSIDE OF THE BALLOON AND VISUALIZE COMPRESSING THE CHAKRA WITHIN.
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
I UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE OF IT IN MY MIND...
SWSH
...BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO COMPRESS MY FULL CHAKRA AND CONTAIN IT IN THE SHAPE OF A PERFECT SPHERE...
GLARE
WHAPWHAP

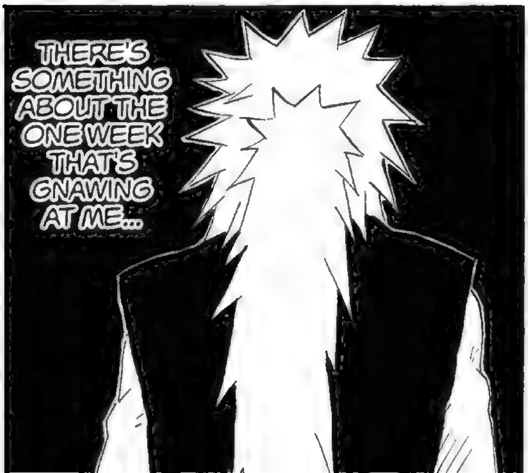

ZWIRL
CLATTER
CLATTER
THUMP
URGH!
PLAYING MIGHTY MENTOR BY TEACHING HIM JUTSU HE HAS NO HOPE OF MASTERING?
...THAT'S PRETTY CRUEL. THAT'S HOW DREAMY-EYED BRATS GET STARTED ON THE WHOLE *I'M GOING TO BECOME HOKAGE* FARCE!
GRR
UNNH
ROOOOOOAR!!!


THE SIXTH NIGHT...

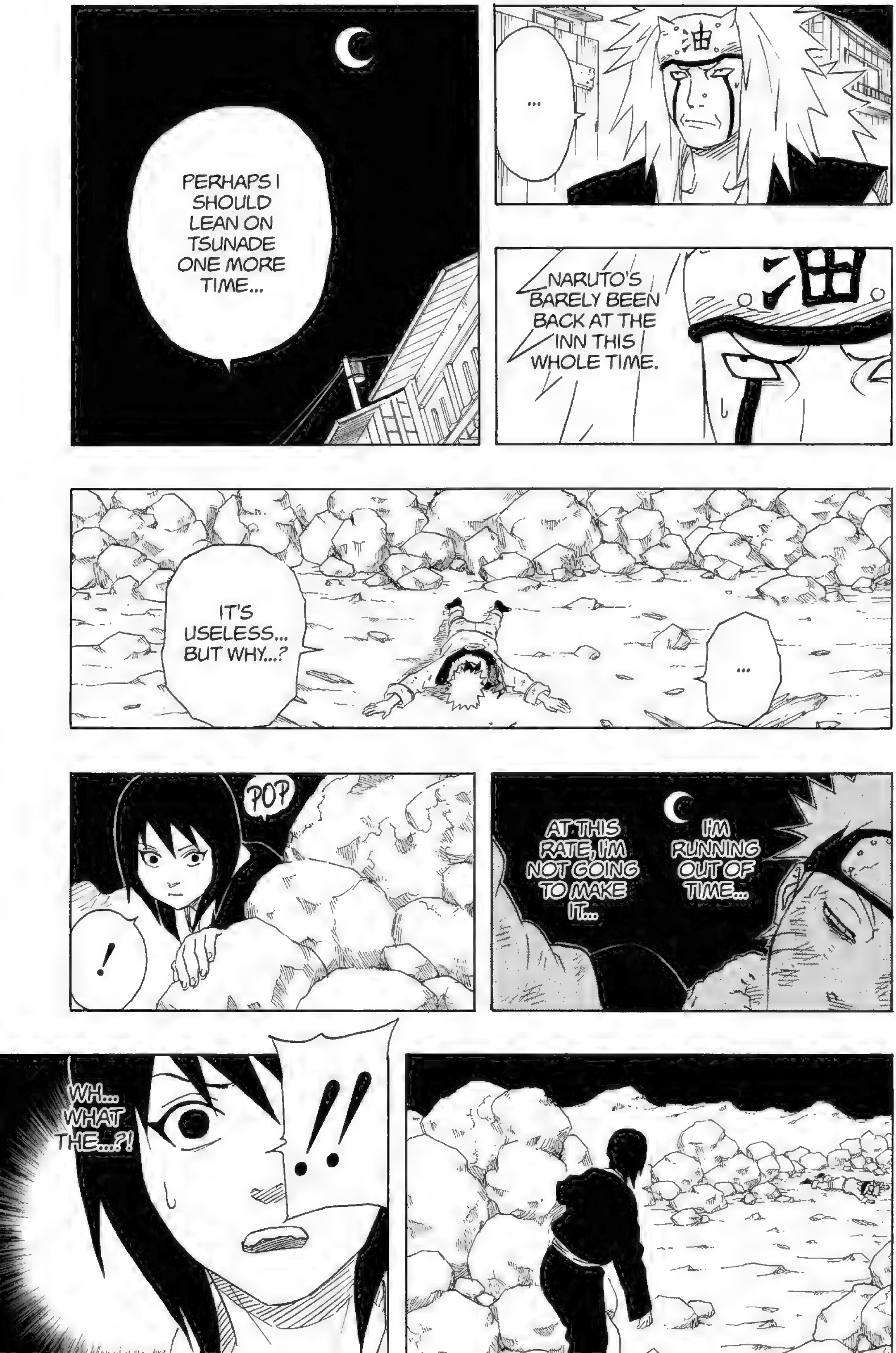

...TOMORROW'S THE DAY, HUH...

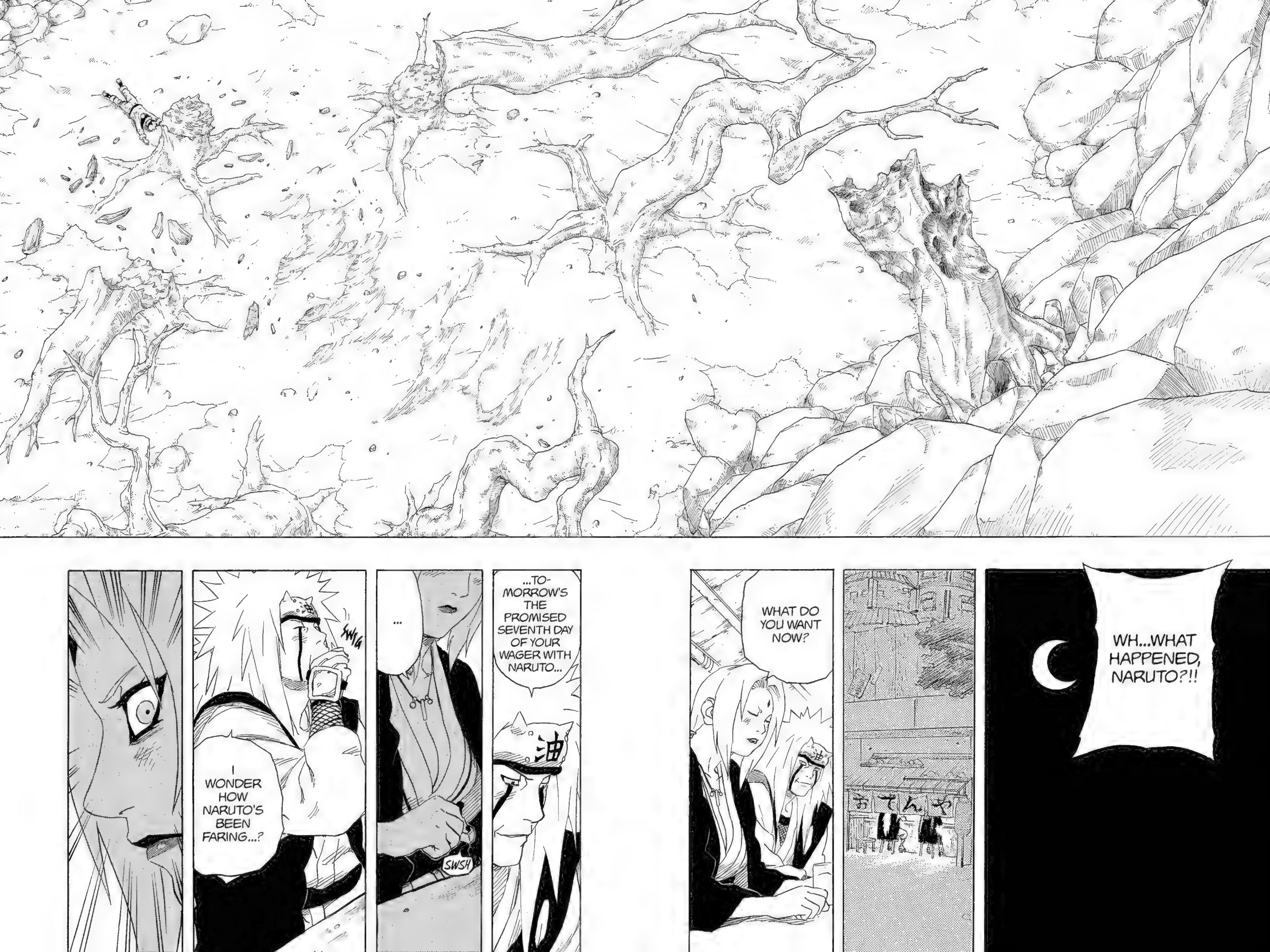

もちや
...

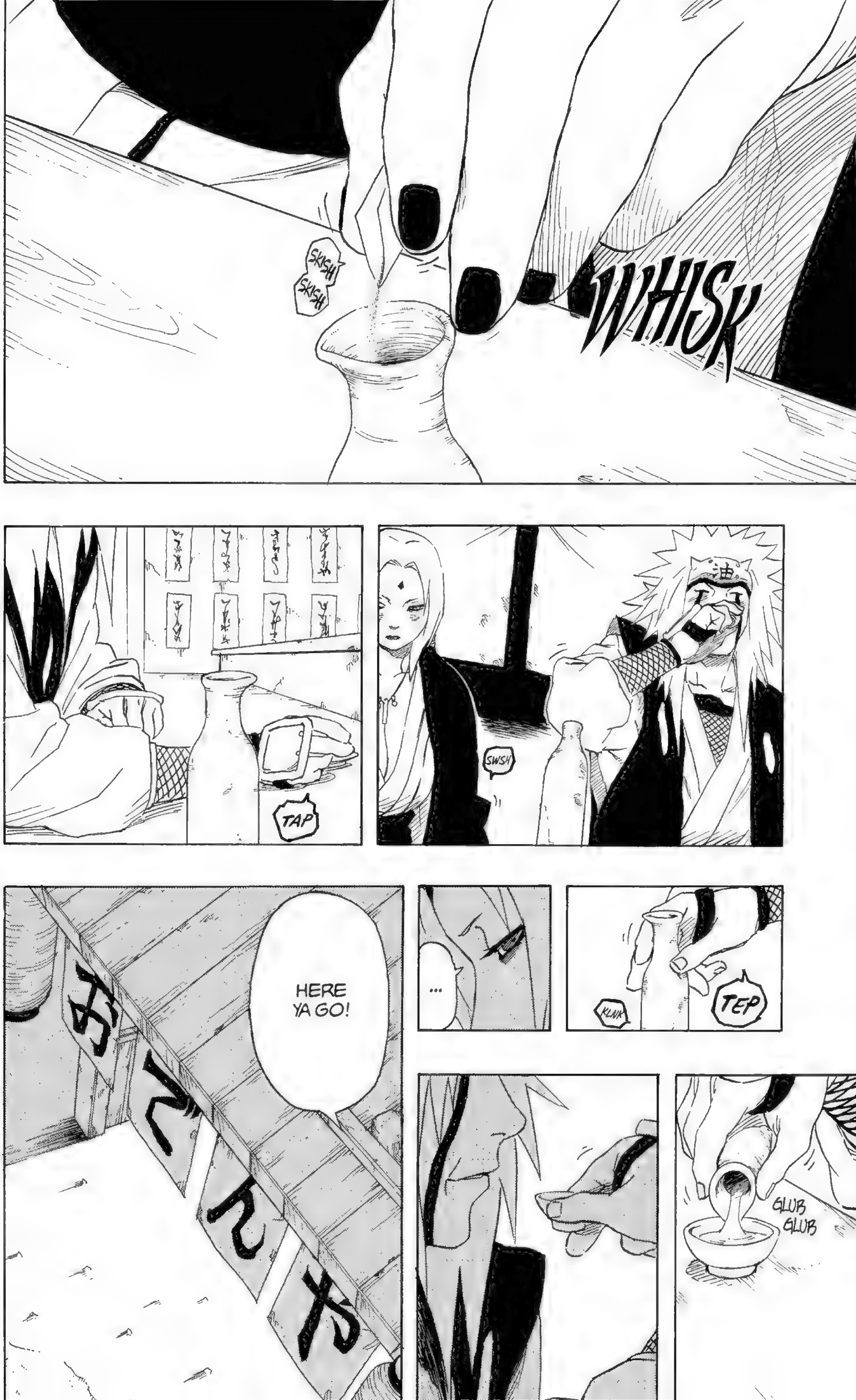

FROM THE DEGREE OF TSUNADE'S AGITATION...
...HE MUST HAVE OFFERED SOMETHING HUGE...

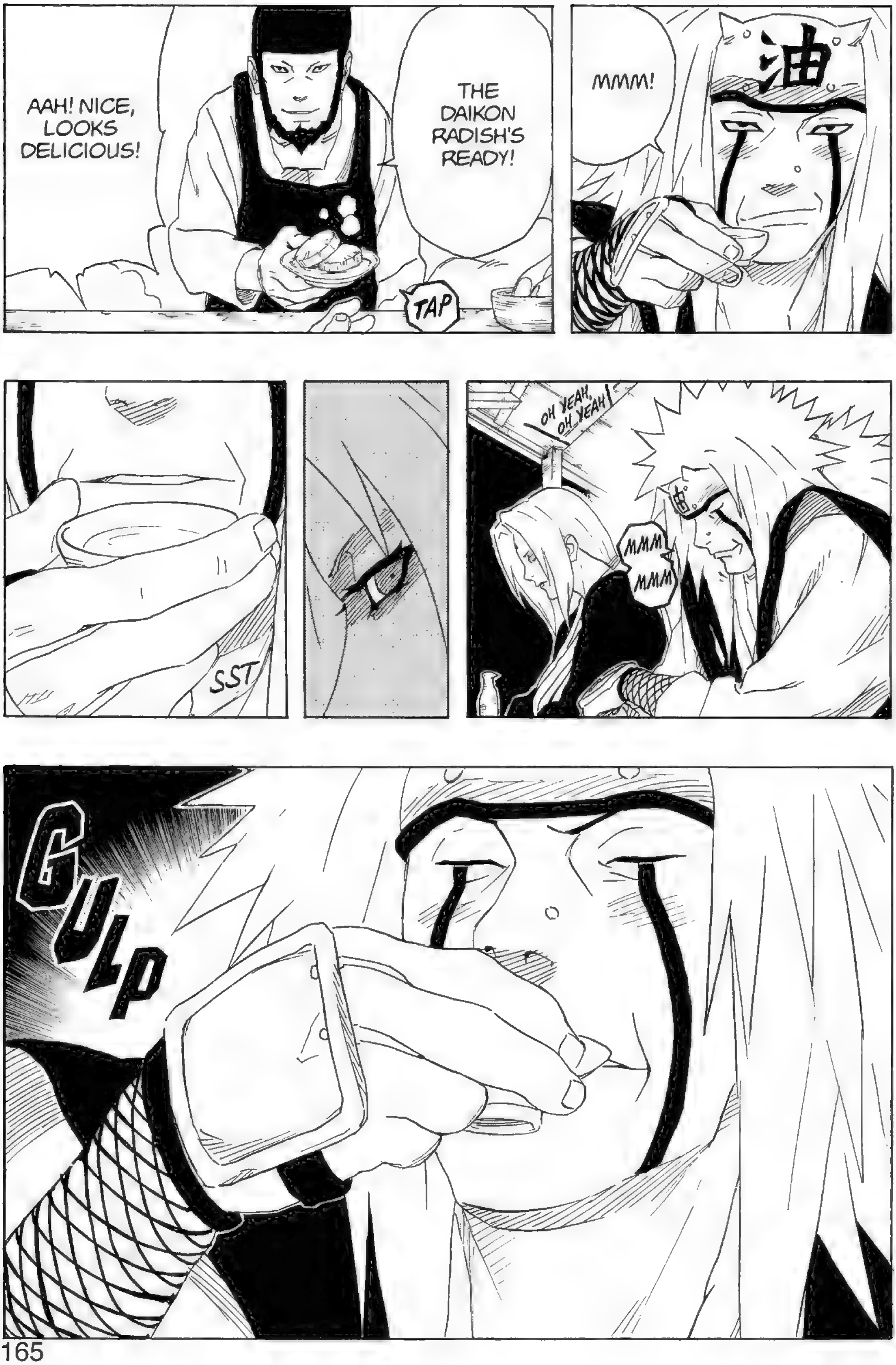

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE ONE WEEK THAT'S GNAWING AT ME...

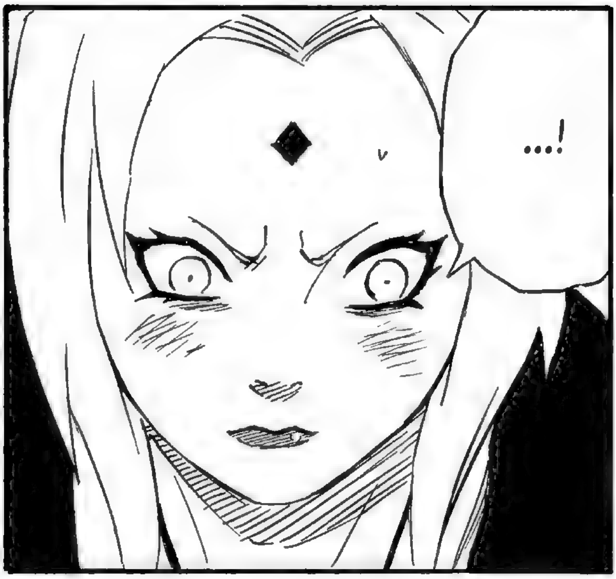
READ THIS WAY


...
NARUTO'S BARELY BEEN BACK AT THE INN THIS WHOLE TIME.
PERHAPS I SHOULD LEAN ON TSUNADE ONE MORE TIME...
...
IT'S USELESS... BUT WHY...?
I'M RUNNING OUT OF TIME...
AT THIS RATE, I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT...
POP
!
!!
WH... WHAT THE...?!

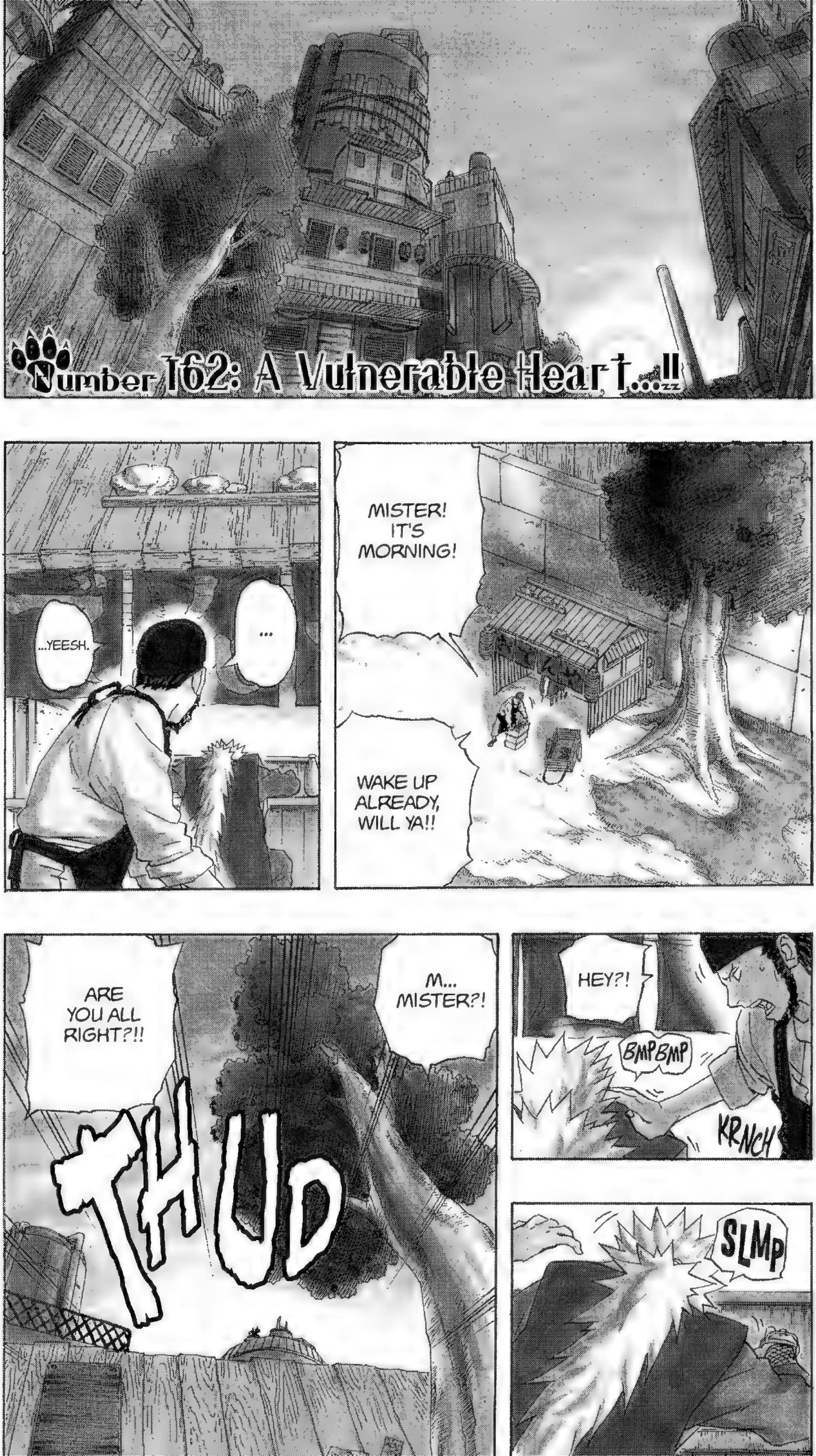

WH...WHAT HAPPENED, NARUTO?!!
おでんや
WHAT DO YOU WANT NOW?
...TO-MORROW'S THE PROMISED SEVENTH DAY OF YOUR WAGER WITH NARUTO...
...
SWSH
SWIG
I WONDER HOW NARUTO'S BEEN FARING...?


WHISK
SKISH
SKISH
SWSH
TAP
TEP
KLNK
...
HERE YA GO!
GLUB GLUB


油
MMM!
THE DAIKON RADISH'S READY!
AAH! NICE, LOOKS DELICIOUS!
TAP
OH YEAH, OH YEAH!
MMM MMM
SST
GULP



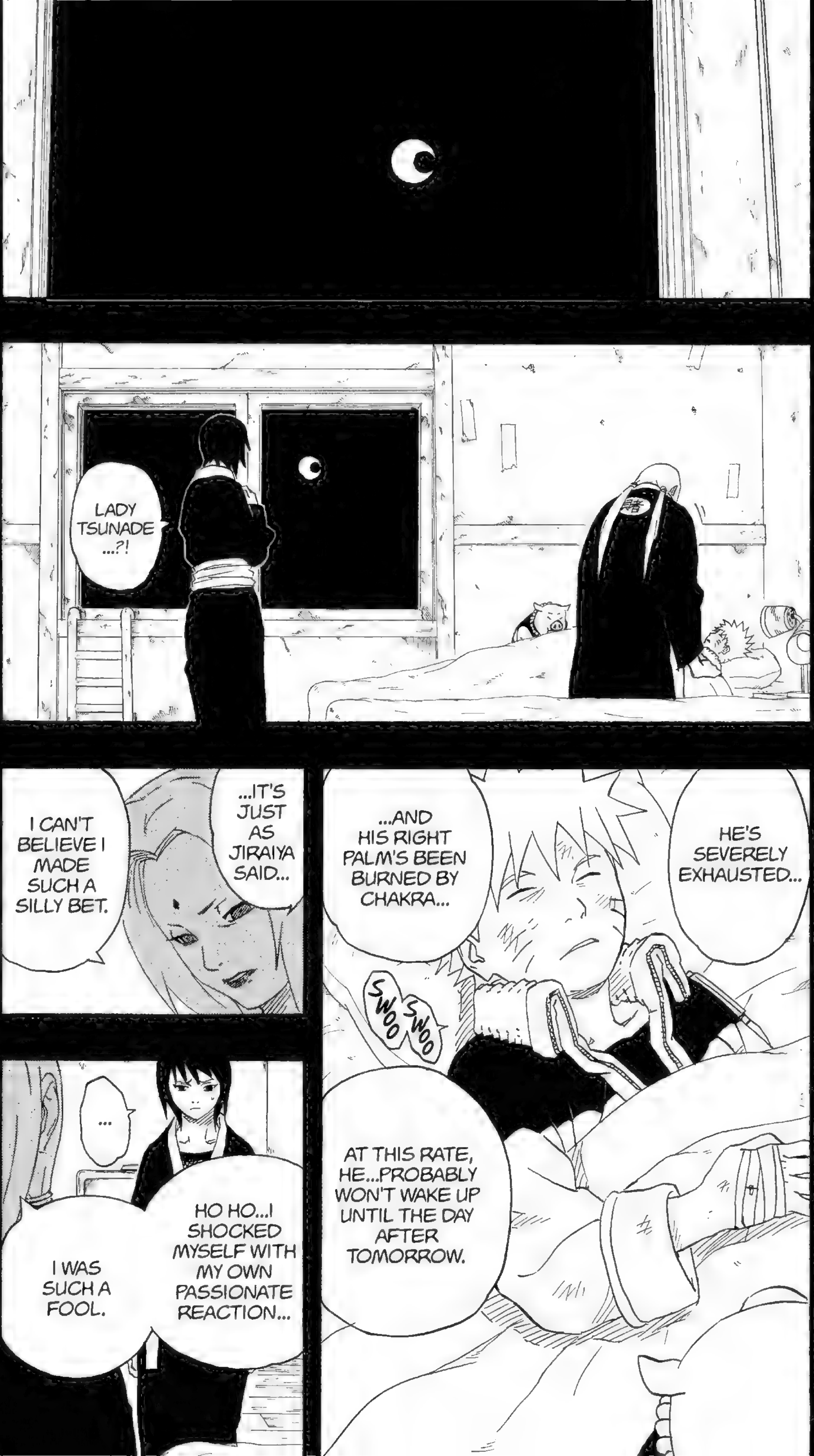
Number 162: A Vulnerable Heart...!!

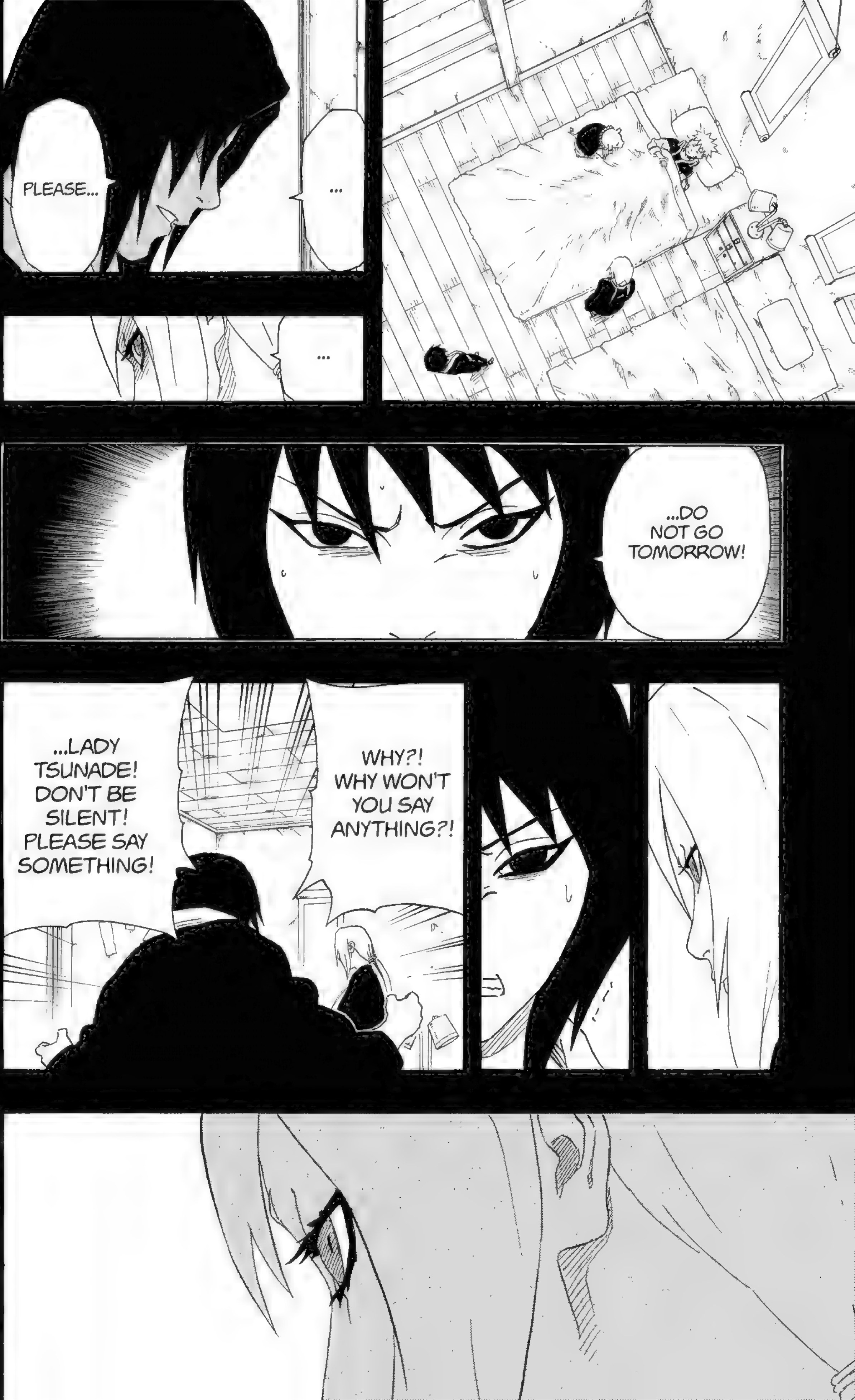

zz
MISTER! IT'S MORNING!
WAKE UP ALREADY, WILL YA!!
...
...YEESH.
HEY?!
BMPBMP
KRNCH
SLMP
M... MISTER?!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!!
THUD

Number 162:

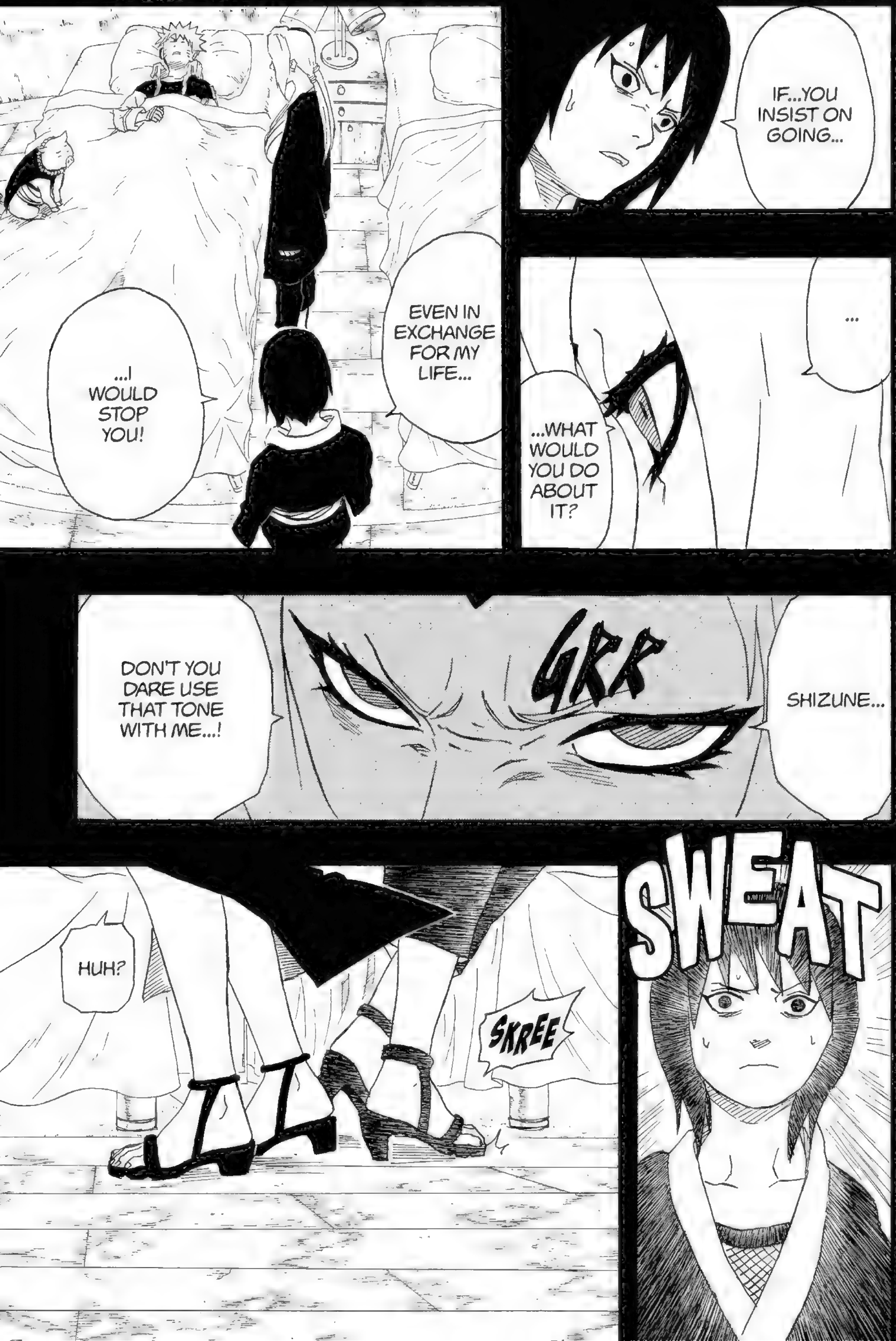
A Vulnerable Heart...!!

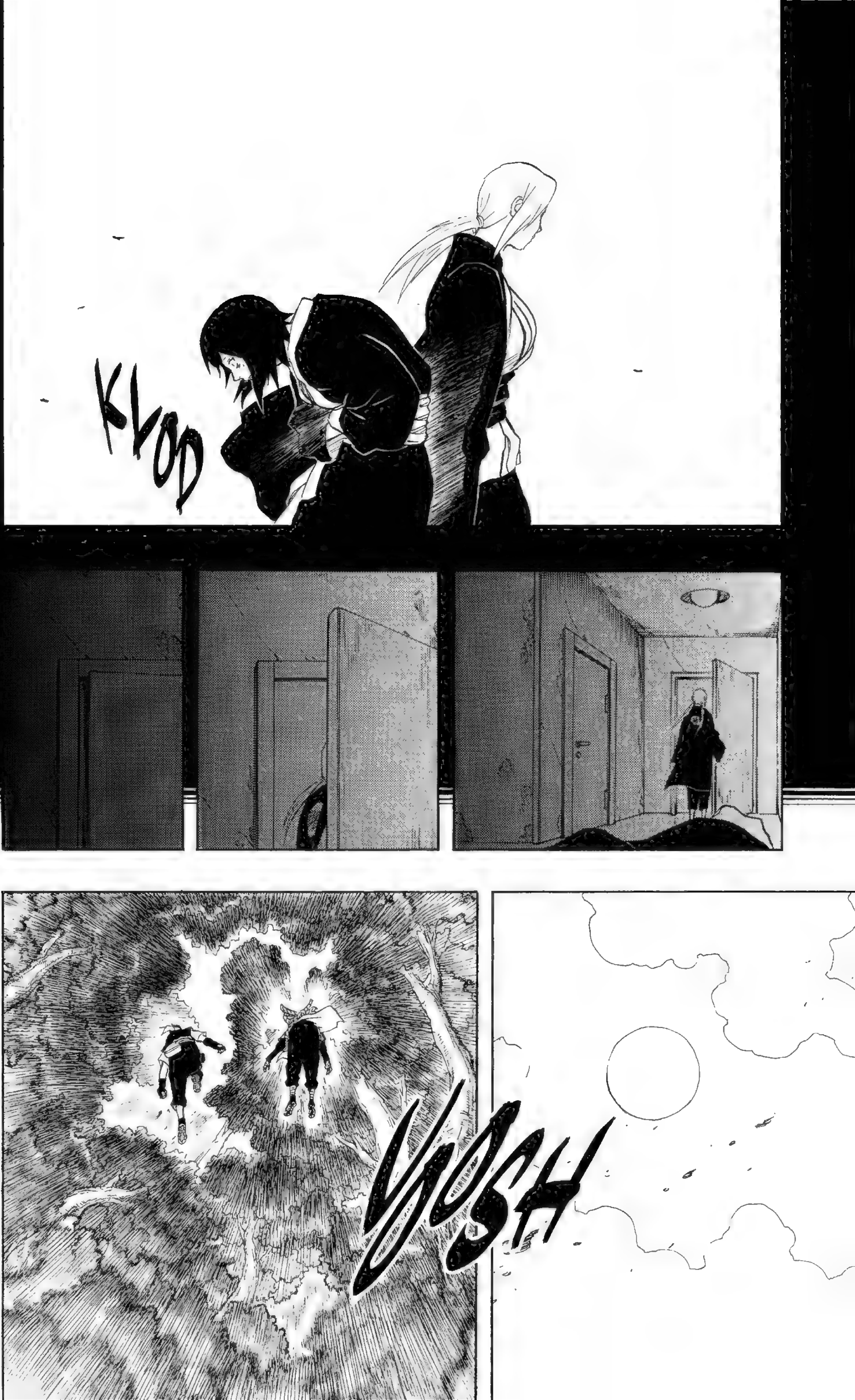
NARUTO
-ナルト-


LADY TSUNADE ...?!
HE'S SEVERELY EXHAUSTED...
...AND HIS RIGHT PALM'S BEEN BURNED BY CHAKRA...
SWOO SWOO
AT THIS RATE, HE...PROBABLY WON'T WAKE UP UNTIL THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
...IT'S JUST AS JIRAIYA SAID...
I CAN'T BELIEVE I MADE SUCH A SILLY BET.
...
HO HO...I SHOCKED MYSELF WITH MY OWN PASSIONATE REACTION...
I WAS SUCH A FOOL.

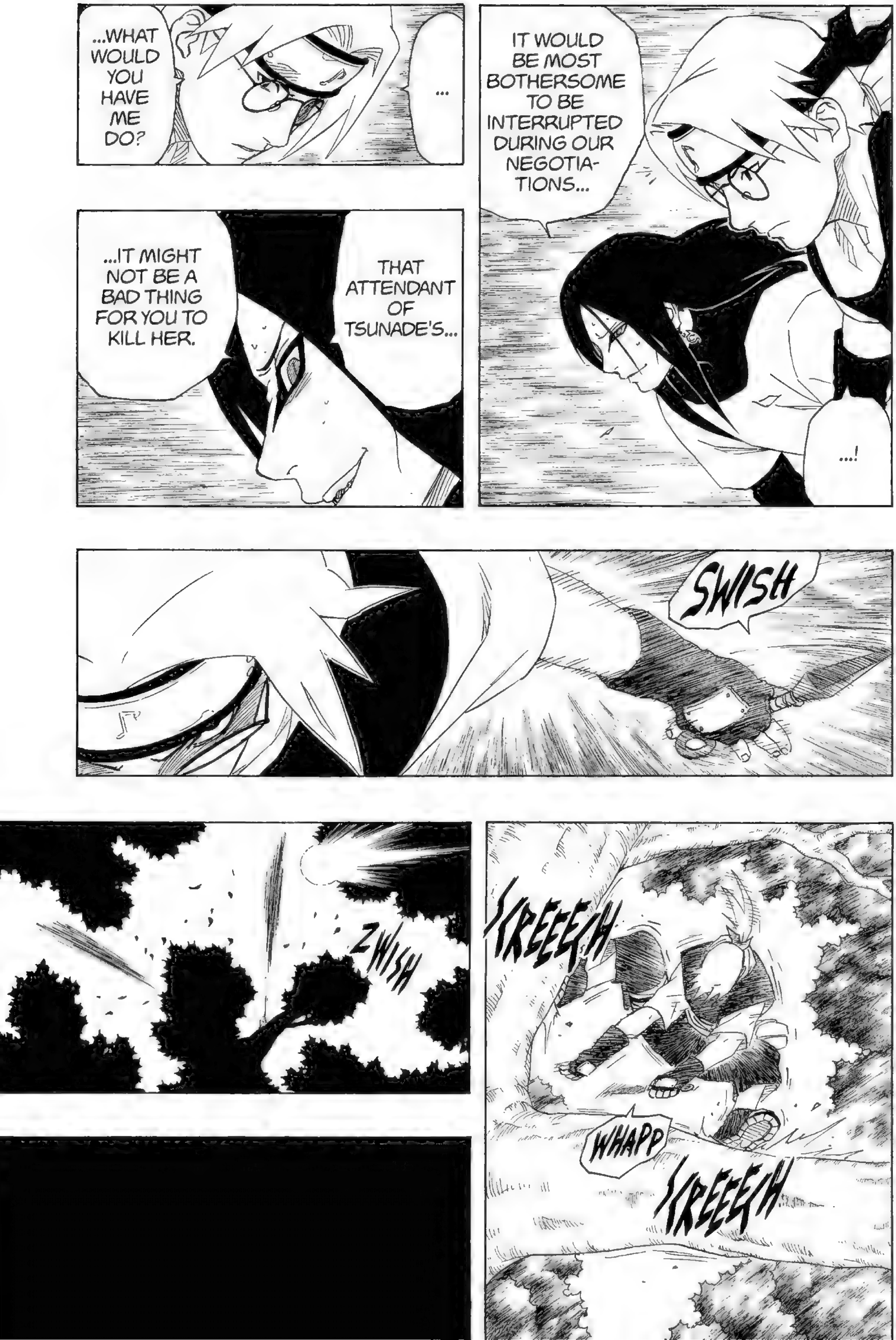

PLEASE...
...
...
...DO NOT GO TOMORROW!
...LADY TSUNADE! DON'T BE SILENT! PLEASE SAY SOMETHING!
WHY?! WHY WON'T YOU SAY ANYTHING?!

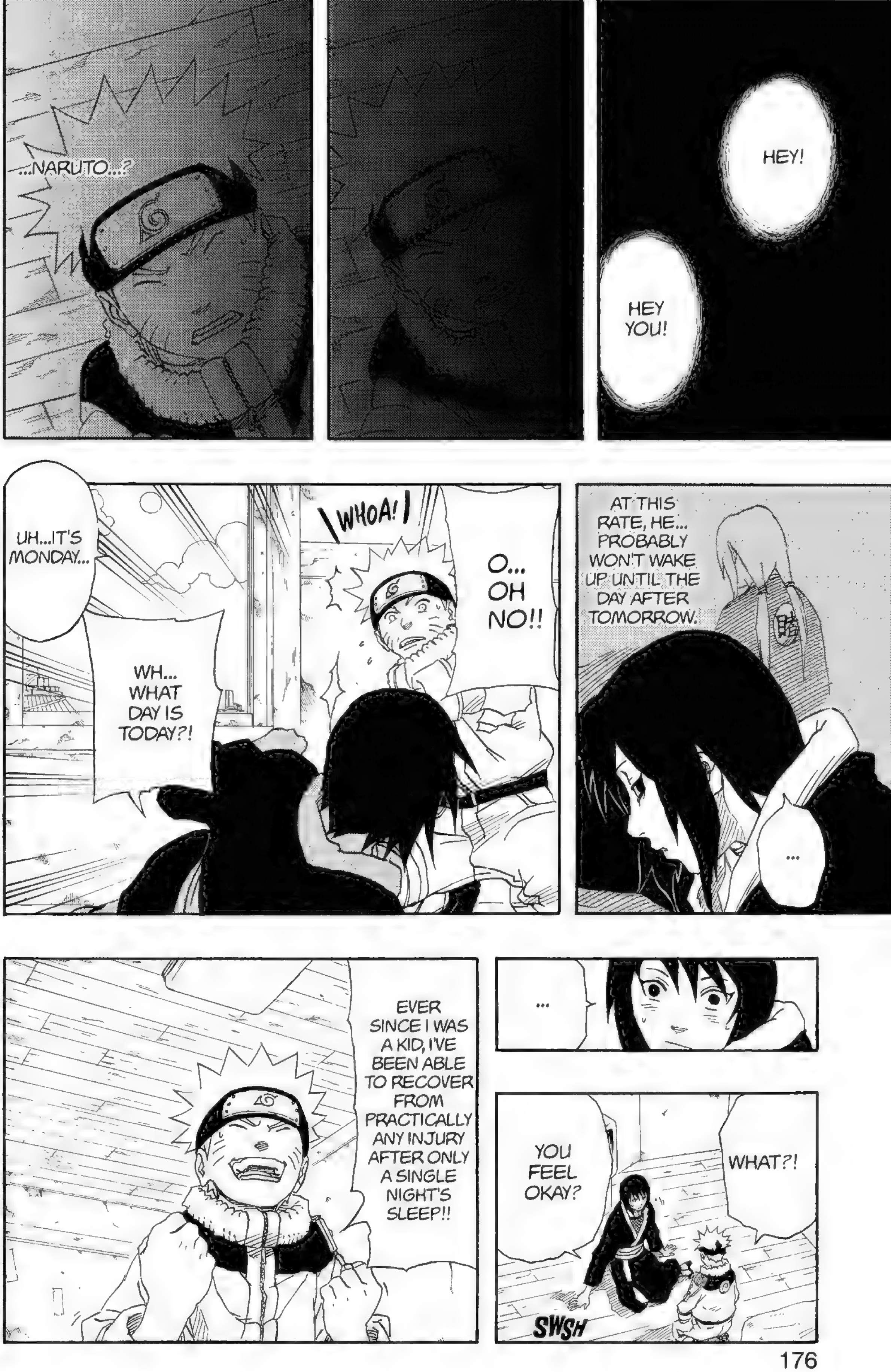
READ THIS WAY

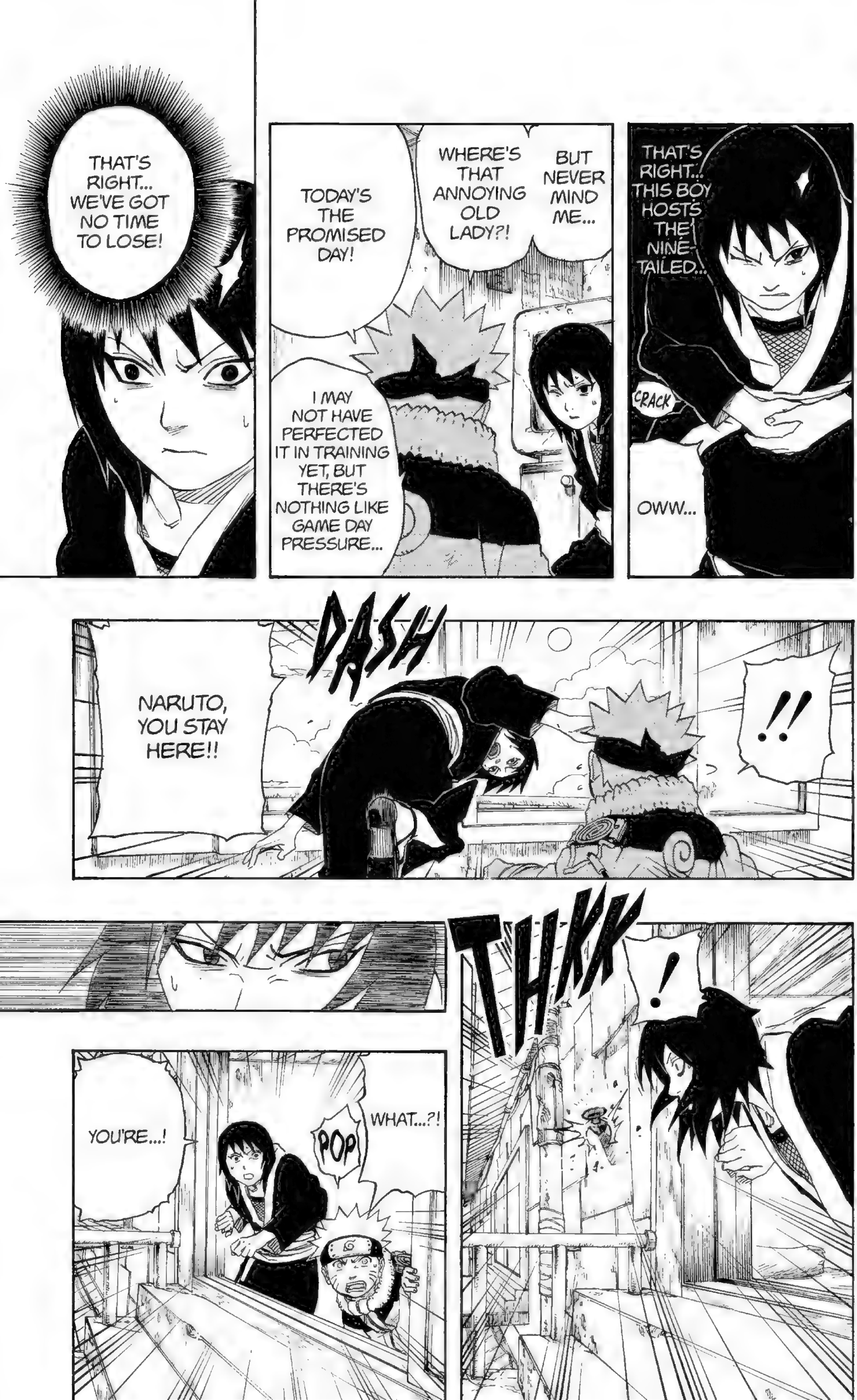

IF...YOU INSIST ON GOING...
...
...WHAT WOULD YOU DO ABOUT IT?
EVEN IN EXCHANGE FOR MY LIFE...
...I WOULD STOP YOU!
SHIZUNE...
GRR
DON'T YOU DARE USE THAT TONE WITH ME...!
SWEAT
SKREE
HUH?

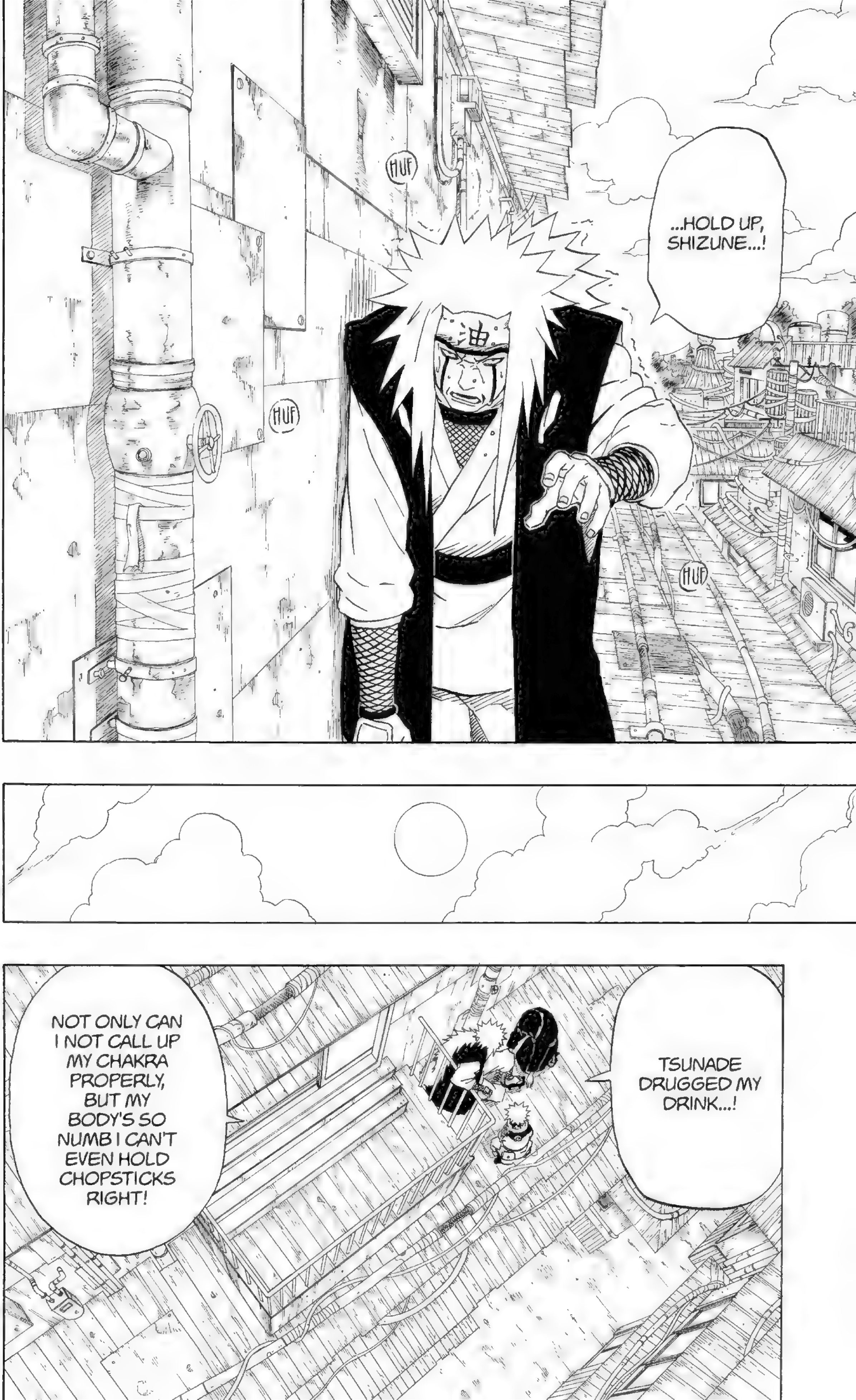

KLOD
VUSH

READ THIS WAY

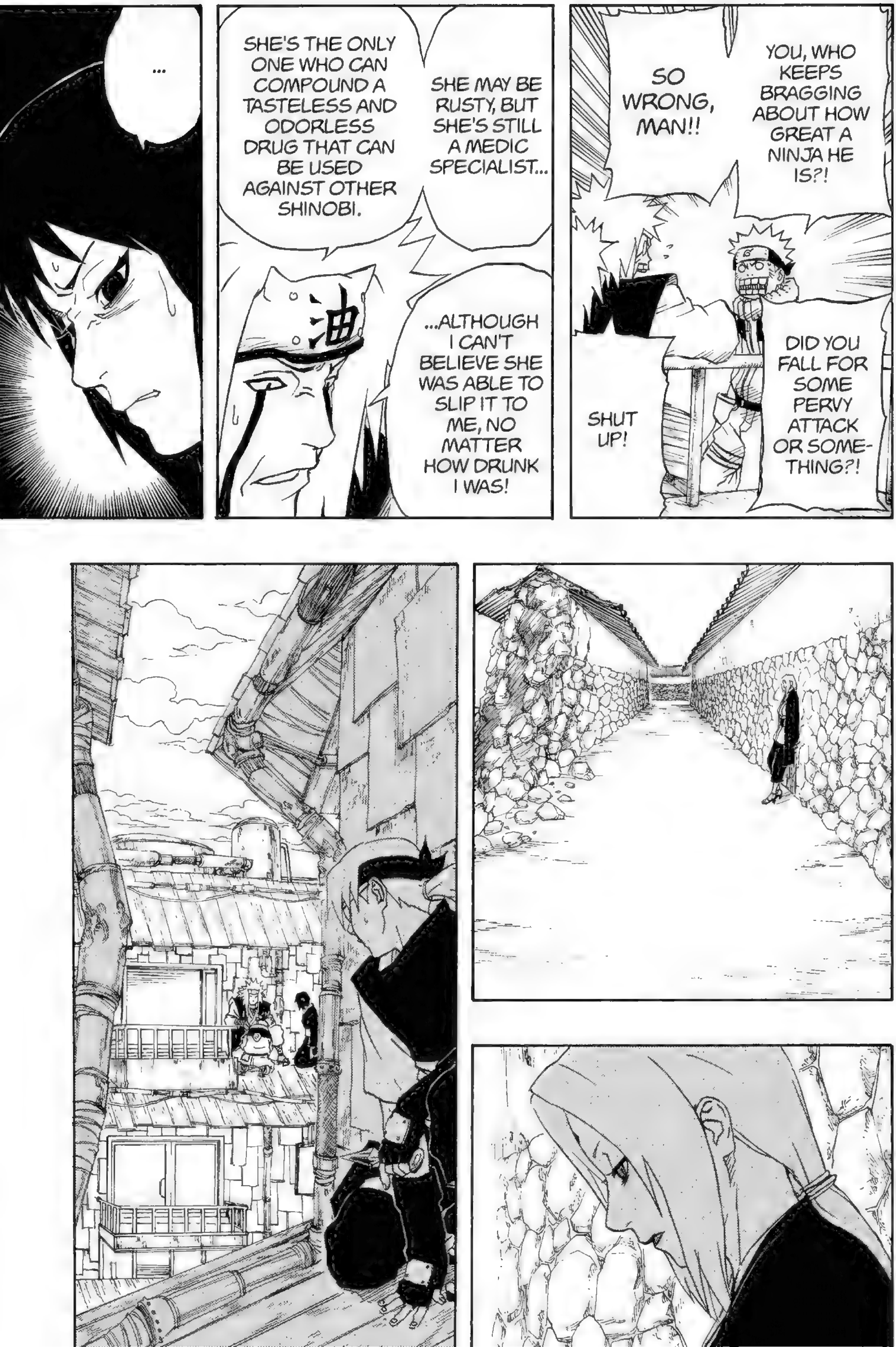

IT WOULD BE MOST BOTHERSOME TO BE INTERRUPTED DURING OUR NEGOTIATIONS...
...!
...
...WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?
THAT ATTENDANT OF TSUNADE'S...
...IT MIGHT NOT BE A BAD THING FOR YOU TO KILL HER.
SWISH
SCREEECH
WHAPP
SCREEECH
ZWISH

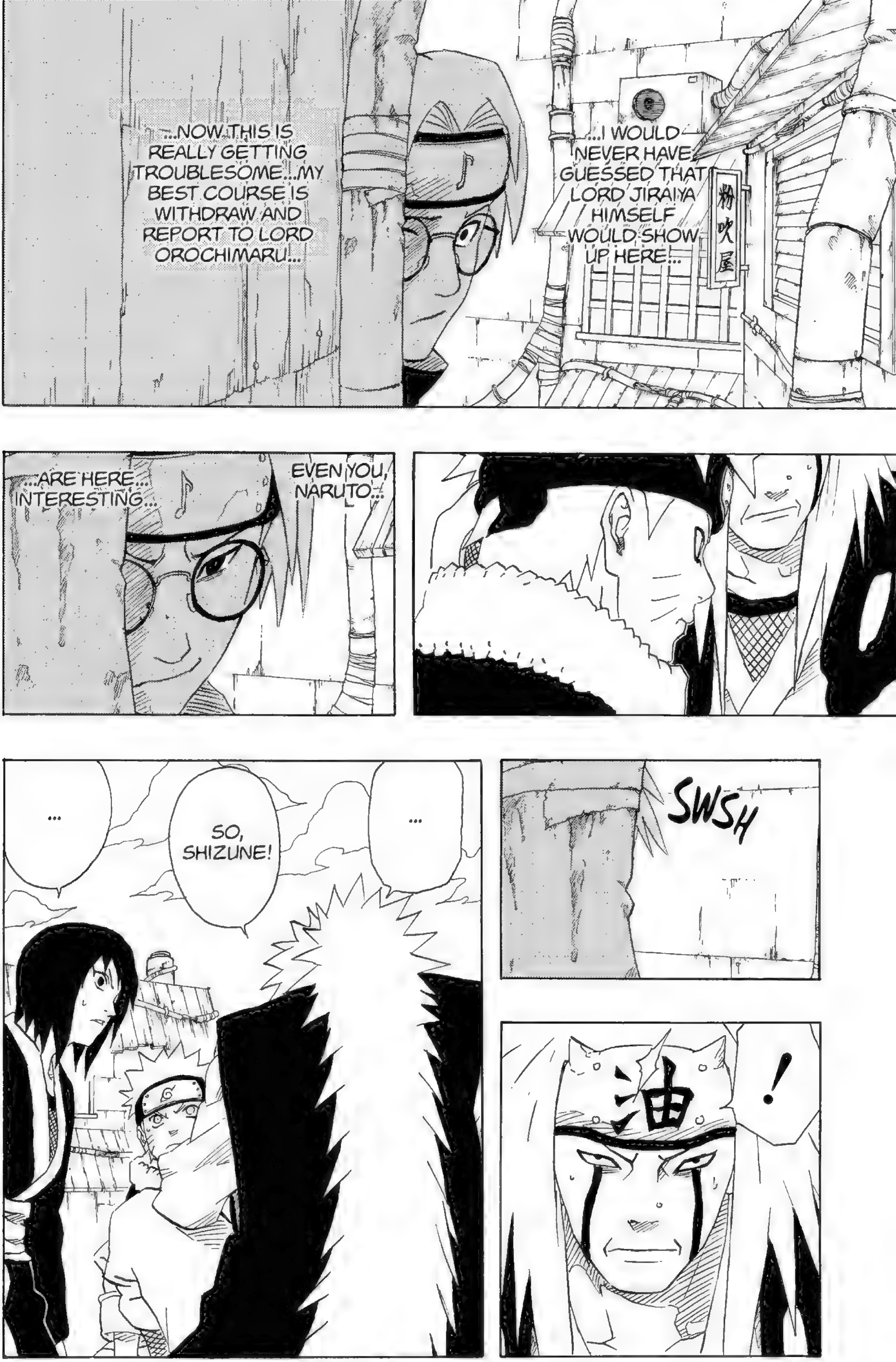

HEY!
HEY YOU!
...NARUTO...?
AT THIS RATE, HE... PROBABLY WON'T WAKE UP UNTIL THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
...
O... OH NO!!
WHOA!
WH... WHAT DAY IS TODAY?!
UH...IT'S MONDAY...
...
WHAT?!
YOU FEEL OKAY?
SWSH
EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO RECOVER FROM PRACTICALLY ANY INJURY AFTER ONLY A SINGLE NIGHT'S SLEEP!!


THAT'S RIGHT... THIS BOY HOSTS THE NINE-TAILED...
CRACK
OWW...
BUT NEVER MIND ME...
WHERE'S THAT ANNOYING OLD LADY?!
TODAY'S THE PROMISED DAY!
I MAY NOT HAVE PERFECTED IT IN TRAINING YET, BUT THERE'S NOTHING LIKE GAME DAY PRESSURE...
THAT'S RIGHT... WE'VE GOT NO TIME TO LOSE!
!!
DASH
NARUTO, YOU STAY HERE!!
THKK
!
WHAT...?!
POP
YOU'RE...!

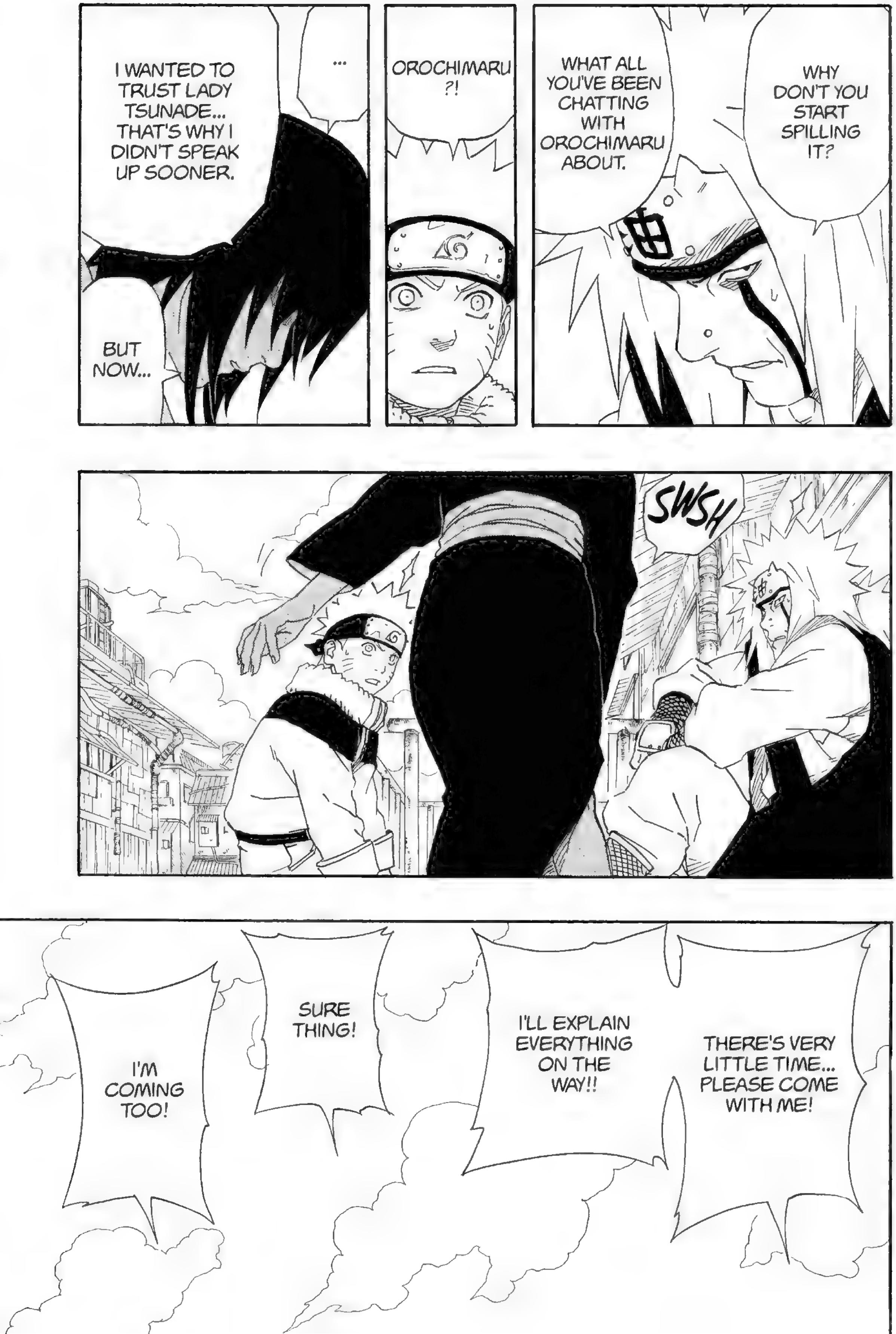

HUF
HUF
...HOLD UP, SHIZUNE...!
HUF
TSUNADE DRUGGED MY DRINK...!
NOT ONLY CAN I NOT CALL UP MY CHAKRA PROPERLY, BUT MY BODY'S SO NUMB I CAN'T EVEN HOLD CHOPSTICKS RIGHT!

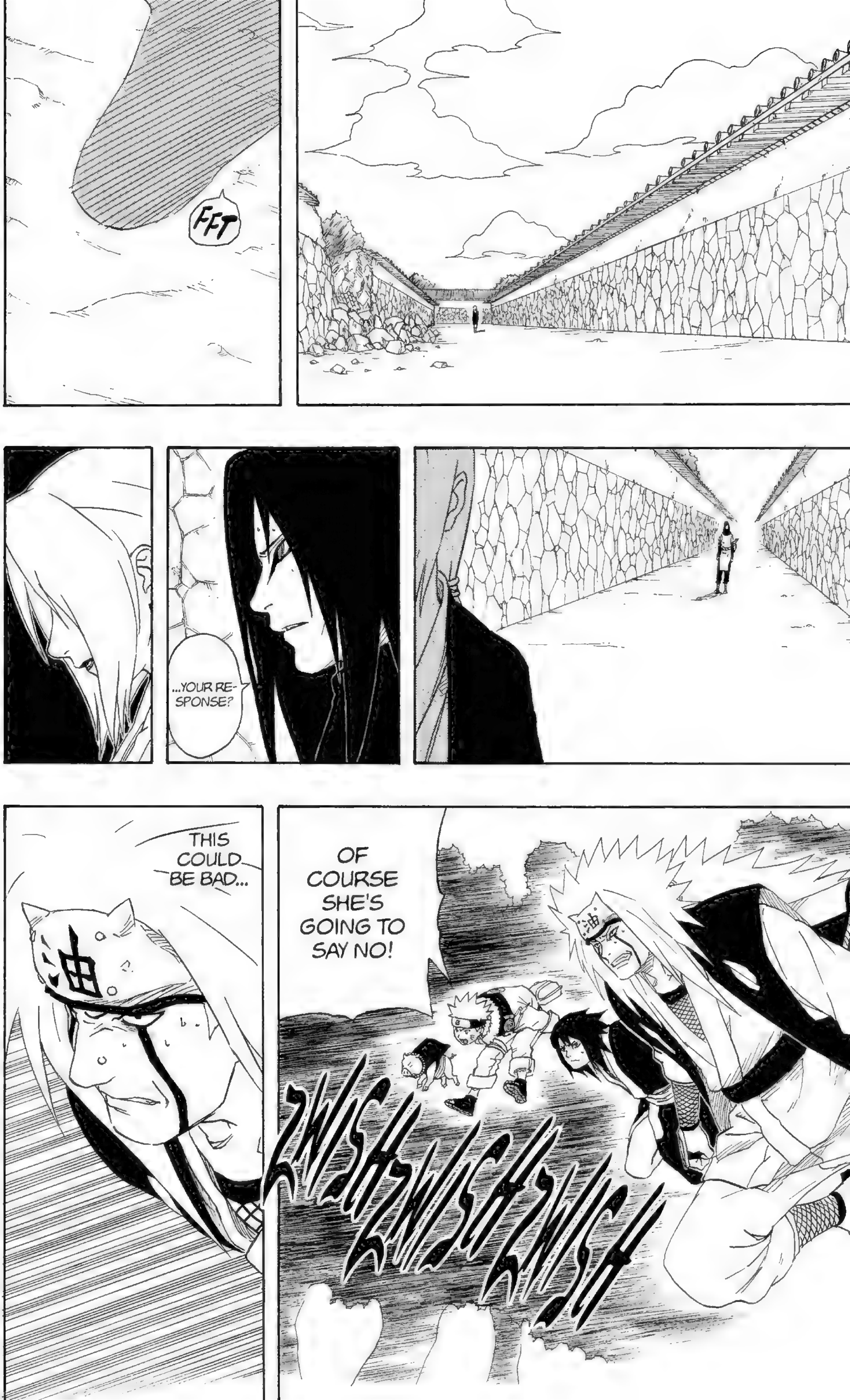
READ THIS WAY


YOU, WHO KEEPS BRAGGING ABOUT HOW GREAT A NINJA HE IS?!
SO WRONG, MAN!!
DID YOU FALL FOR SOME PERVY ATTACK OR SOMETHING?!
SHUT UP!
SHE MAY BE RUSTY, BUT SHE'S STILL A MEDIC SPECIALIST...
SHE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN COMPOUND A TASTELESS AND ODORLESS DRUG THAT CAN BE USED AGAINST OTHER SHINOBI.
...ALTHOUGH I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE WAS ABLE TO SLIP IT TO ME, NO MATTER HOW DRUNK I WAS!
油
...

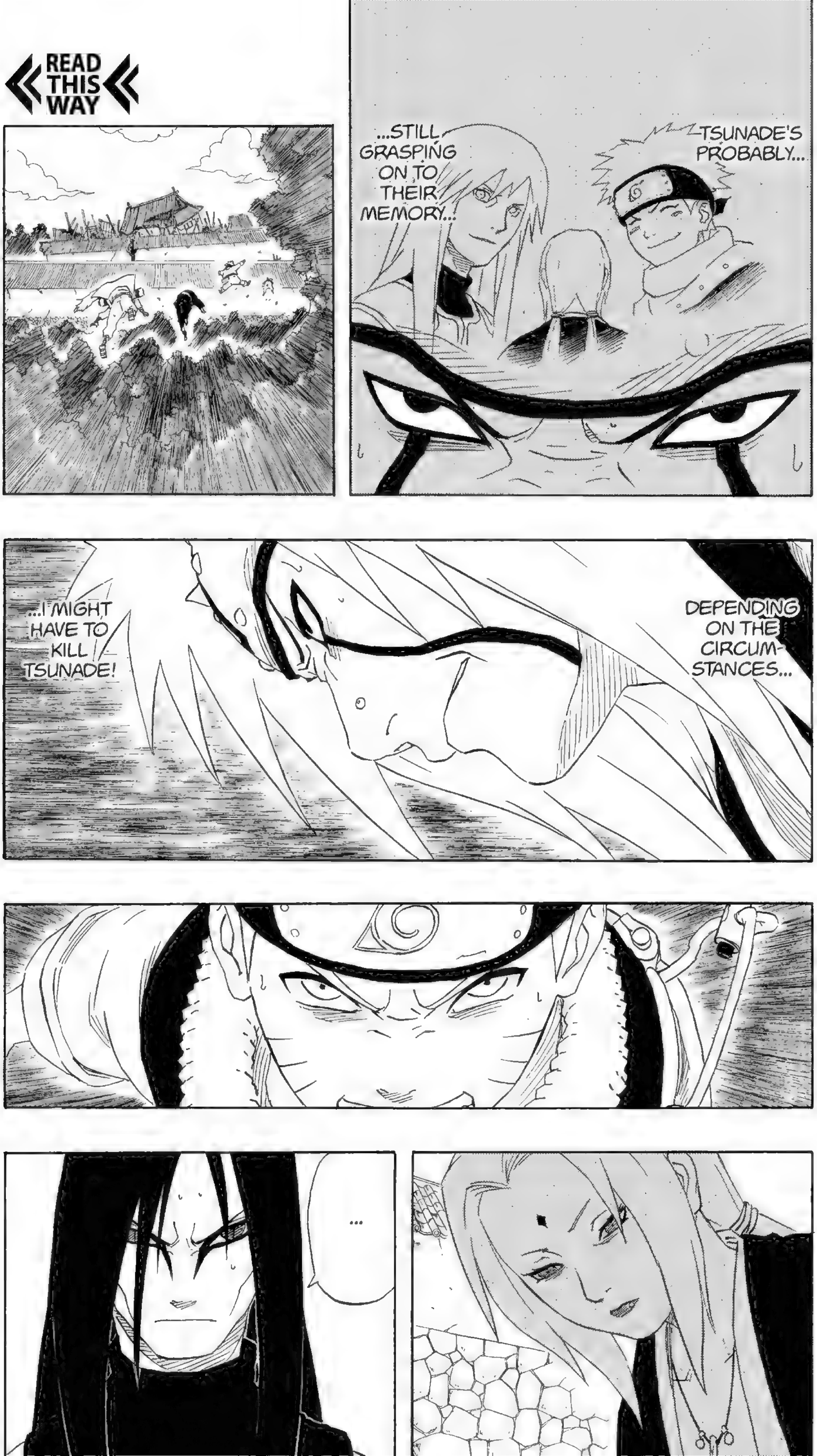

...I WOULD NEVER HAVE GUESSED THAT LORD JIRAIYA HIMSELF WOULD SHOW UP HERE...
...NOW THIS IS REALLY GETTING TROUBLESOME...MY BEST COURSE IS WITHDRAW AND REPORT TO LORD OROCHIMARU...
EVEN YOU, NARUTO...
...ARE HERE... INTERESTING...
...
SO, SHIZUNE!
...
SWSH
!

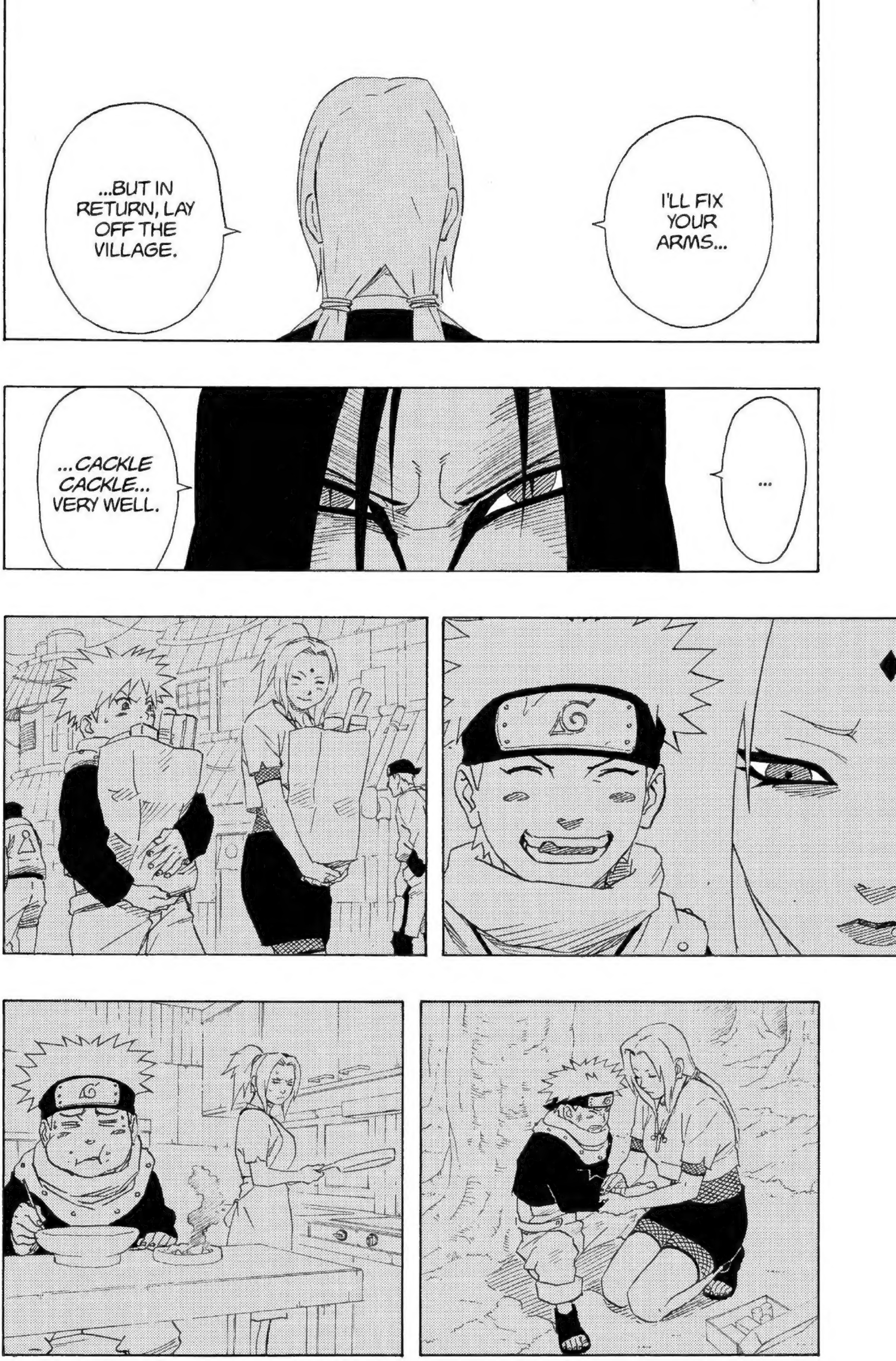
READ THIS WAY


WHY DON'T YOU START SPILLING IT?
WHAT ALL YOU'VE BEEN CHATTING WITH OROCHIMARU ABOUT.
OROCHIMARU?!
...
I WANTED TO TRUST LADY TSUNADE... THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T SPEAK UP SOONER.
BUT NOW...
SWSH
THERE'S VERY LITTLE TIME... PLEASE COME WITH ME!
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING ON THE WAY!!
SURE THING!
I'M COMING TOO!

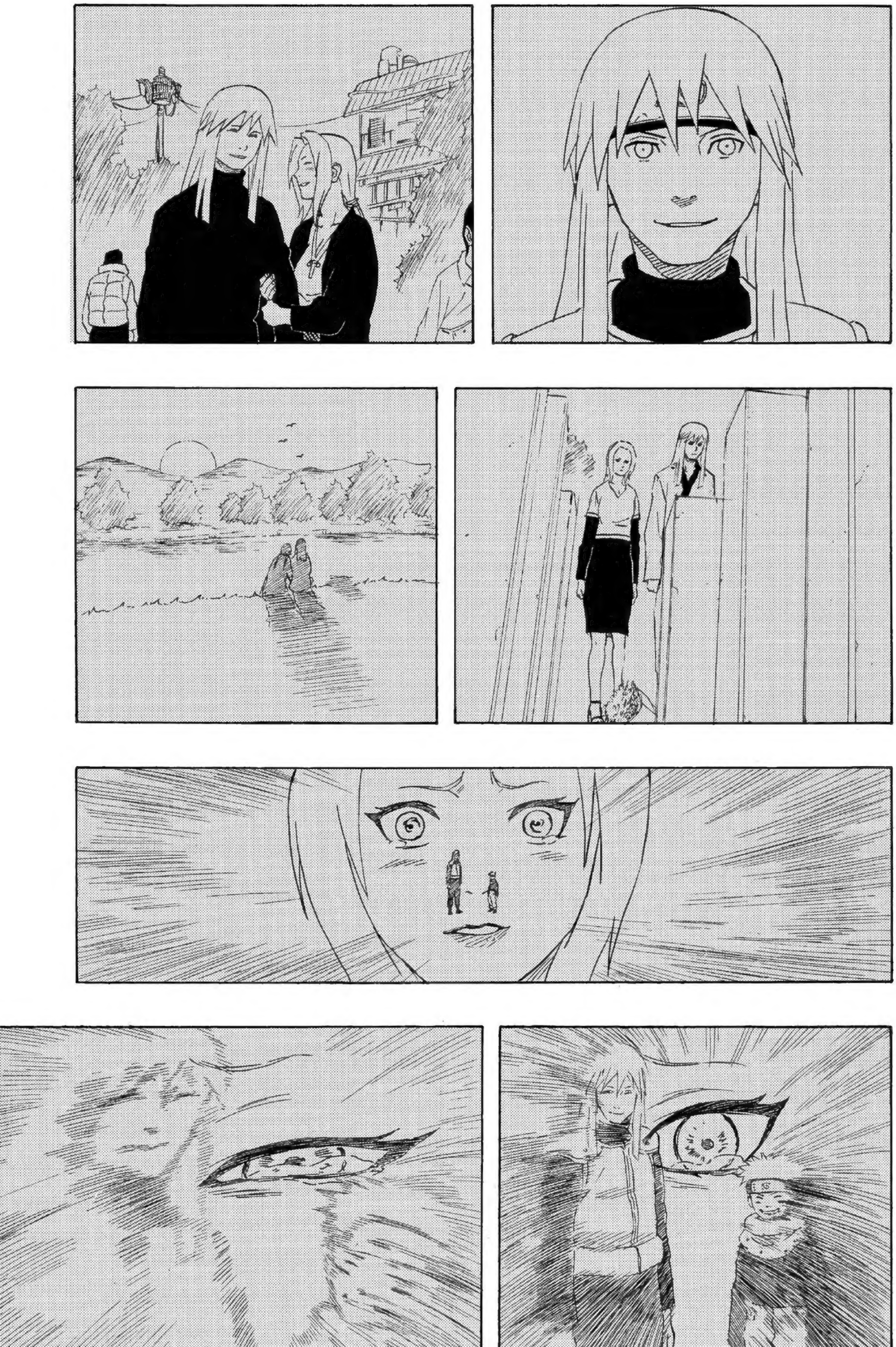

FFT
...YOUR RE-SPONSE?
OF COURSE SHE'S GOING TO SAY NO!
ZWISH ZWISH ZWISH
THIS COULD BE BAD...

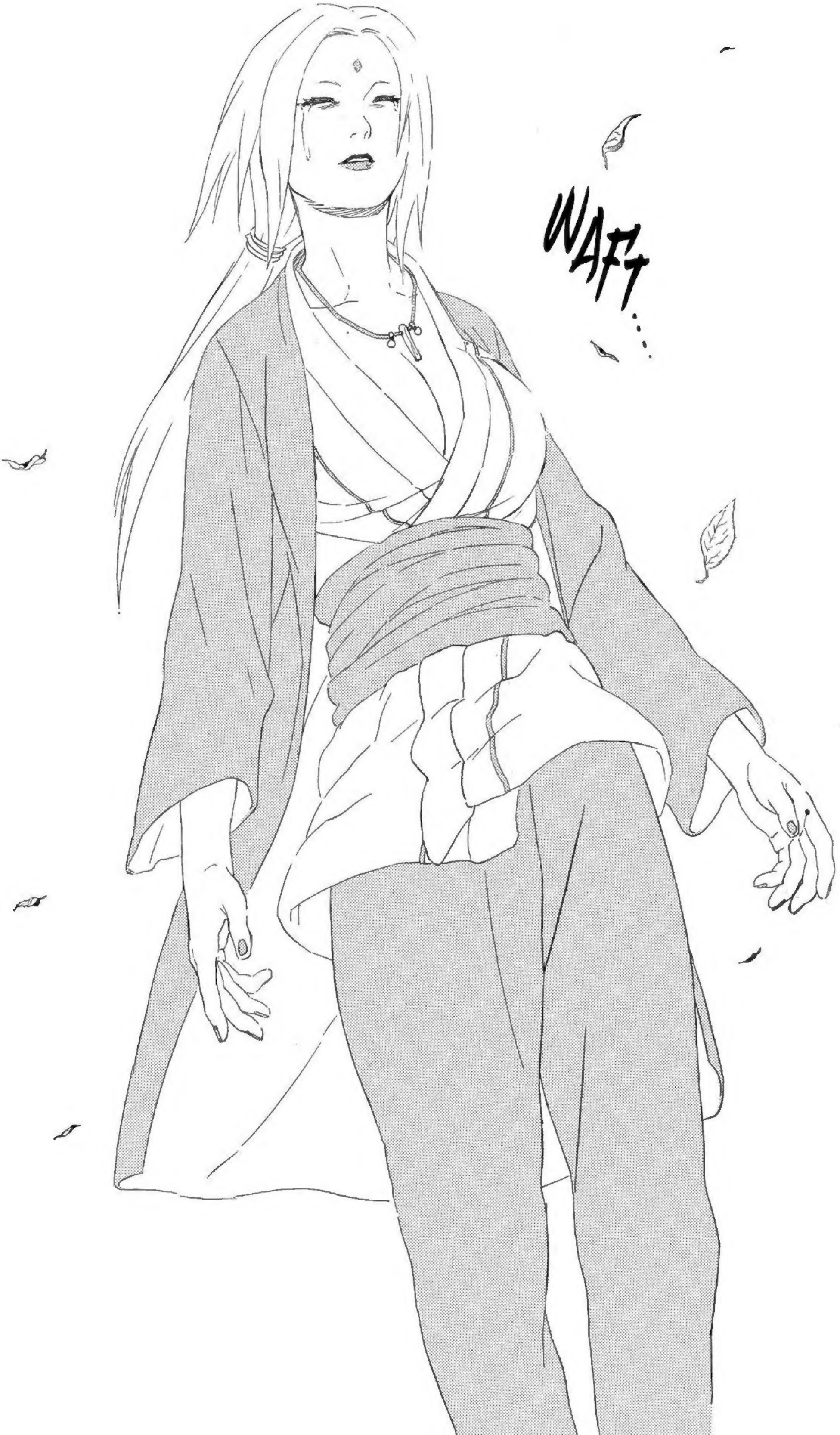
READ THIS WAY

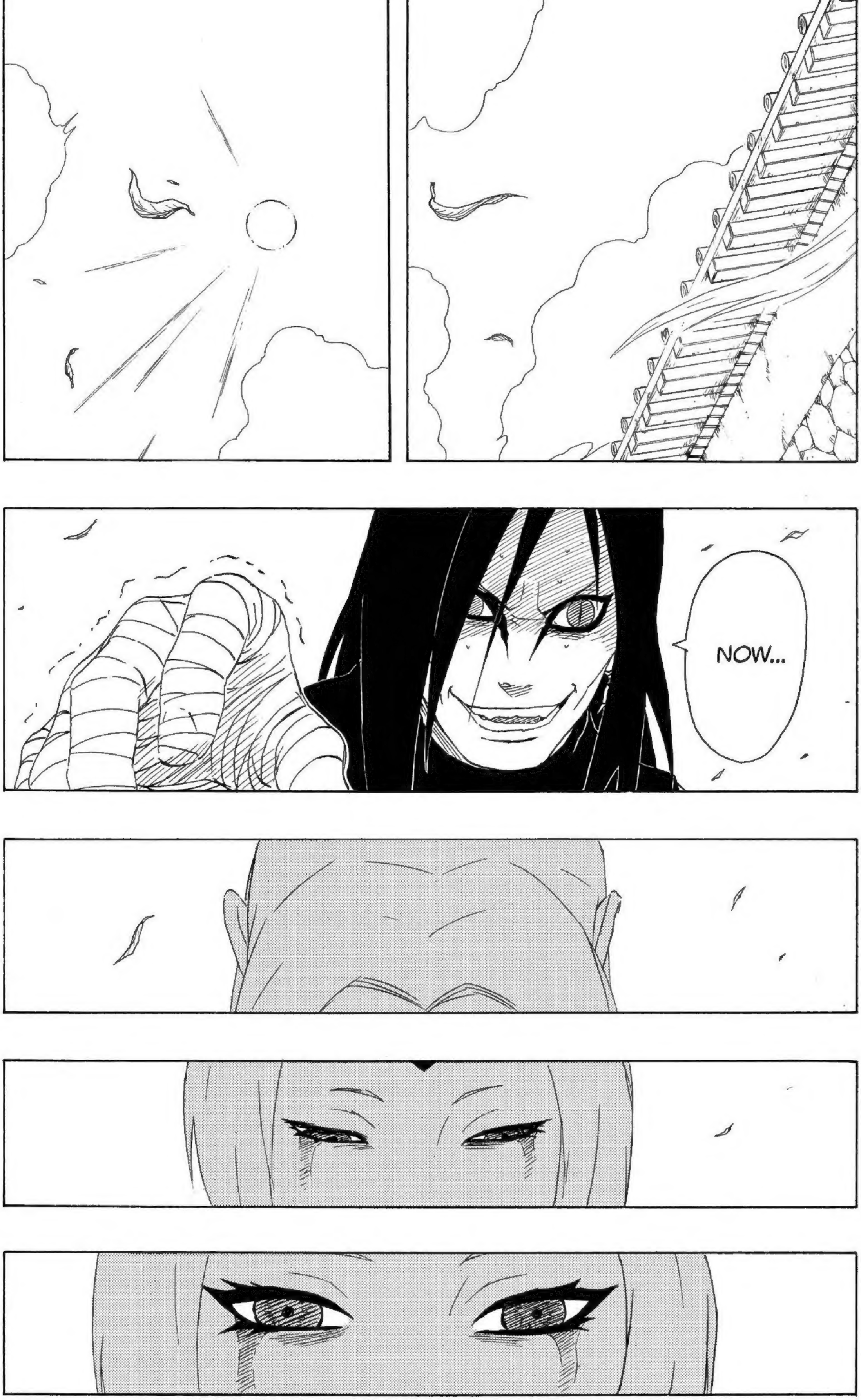

TSUNADE'S PROBABLY...
...STILL GRASPING ON TO THEIR MEMORY...
DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES...
...I MIGHT HAVE TO KILL TSUNADE!
...


I'LL FIX YOUR ARMS...
...BUT IN RETURN, LAY OFF THE VILLAGE.
...
...CACKLE CACKLE... VERY WELL.

READ THIS WAY




WAFT...



TO BE CONTINUED IN *NARUTO* VOLUME 19!!